The Landscape of Conservation Stewardship

The Report of the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
Conservation Study Institute
The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.

Sponsor Information

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park is the only national park to focus on conservation history and the evolving nature of land stewardship in the United States, "where human stories and the natural history are intertwined; where the relatively small acreage serves as an educational resource for the entire National Park Service and a seedbed for American environmental thought." (John Elder)

The park was the boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh, author of *Man and Nature* (1864) and one of the nation's first global environmental thinkers. In 1869 Frederick Billings, strongly influenced by Marsh, established a progressive dairy farm and professionally managed forest on the former Marsh farm. Billings's granddaughter, Mary French Rockefeller, and her husband, conservationist Laurance S. Rockefeller, sustained Billings's mindful practices in forestry and farming and made a gift of the 550-acre forest and their residence to establish the park in 1993. The Park, working in partnership with the Woodstock Foundation's Billings Farm & Museum, continues the tradition of land stewardship for nature conservation, historic preservation, sustainable forestry, recreation, and scenic beauty in one of the oldest planned and managed woodlands in the United States.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
P.O. Box 178
Woodstock, VT 05091
(802) 457-3368

Conservation Study Institute

The Conservation Study Institute was established by the National Park Service to enhance leadership in the field of conservation. The mission of the Institute is to create opportunities for dialogue, inquiry and lifelong learning to enhance the stewardship of landscapes and communities. In collaboration with other government, academic and nonprofit partners, the Institute provides a forum for the National Park Service, the conservation community, and the public to discuss conservation history, contemporary issues and practice, and future directions for the field. The founding partners are the University of Vermont, QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, and Shelburne Farms; we envision the Institute's network of partners will expand over time. As a national program, the new Institute realizes the promise of Laurance S. Rockefeller that "the message and vision of conservation stewardship and its importance for the future will, once again, go out across the nation from the hills of Vermont."

Conservation Study Institute
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The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.

Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller created the Woodstock Foundation in 1968 as a private operating foundation. The foundation's primary programs include operation of the Billings Farm & Museum in an active partnership with Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. The core purpose of the Farm & Museum is to instill in visitors a sense of personal responsibility for their relationship to the land and to the places in which they live. It offers visitors a deep experience in this particular place, which is an operating farm and historical museum of rural Vermont culture. It draws interpretive strength from its significance as a historic place and its heritage of conservation stewardship—from George Perkins Marsh, through the generations of Frederick and Julia Billings and their children, to Mary F. and Laurance S. Rockefeller. The Foundation maintains an endowment for the preservation and conservation of the significant historical resources of the park in perpetuity. It also engages in other projects and philanthropic activities that further its interest which include conservation stewardship and enhancement of the physical, cultural, and spiritual environment of Woodstock, Vermont.

The Woodstock Foundation
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esign and Layout: Audrey Augustin
Harvest Moon Design
Williston, Vermont

rinted By: Stillwater Graphics
Williamstown, Vermont

Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks.

COVER PHOTO: The McKnight Farm, center, and Fairmont Farm, foreground, are working dairy farms in East Montpelier, Vermont, that have been conserved with assistance from the Vermont Land Trust, which holds the development rights. Landowners who help to sustain agriculture by conserving their farms make a stewardship contribution that reaches far beyond their own lives. The McKnight Farm, conserved in the mid-1980s, is owned by Seth and Michelle Gardner, who milk 90 cows. Fairmont Farm came into existence shortly after Austin Cleaves sold the development rights on his 285-acre dairy farm in 1991. His neighbors, John and Donna Hall and their two sons and wives, joined with Austin to form Fairmont Farm as a multi-family corporation. The sale of development rights helped fund the construction of a new barn for their combined 550 cow milking herd, while the merger of their operations resulted in better economies of scale and employee benefits. The McKnight Farm and Fairmont Farm are just two examples of the many ways in which conservation stewardship is affecting people's relationship to the land and their communities. Photo Jeffrey P. Roberts.

The Landscape of Conservation Stewardship

The Report of the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

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Sponsored By:
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
Conservation Study Institute
The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.

In Cooperation With:
The Watershed Center
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment

Published by:
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park
Conservation Study Institute
The Woodstock Foundation, Inc.
Woodstock, Vermont
July 2000

The Landscape of Conservation Stewardship

The Report of the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

Acknowledgments

Throughout the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study, many people provided guidance and inspiration to the Feasibility Study project team. We wish first to express our deep gratitude to the professionals, volunteers, and community members we interviewed, who gave so generously of their time to help us learn about and understand the important work of their organizations. They, and countless others like them, are leading the way for conservation. We also thank the organizations we interviewed for contributing photos to this report and for assisting with documentation during the report production.

We were helped immensely in our analysis of the Stewardship Initiative interviews by a group of visionary people who met with us January 19-20, 1999, in Woodstock, Vermont, to mull over the Study's preliminary findings. The meeting, "Stewardship: New Perspectives, New Partnerships," produced insights that were key to the final shaping of this report. These individuals are: Steve Blackmer, Paul Bruhn, Megan Camp, Peter Forbes, Kyle Jones, Laurie Lane-Zucker, Tim Maguire, David Miles, Larry Morris, and Nancy Shea.

We are indebted to the following people who were instrumental in shaping the Feasibility Study and provided guidance throughout the project: Rolf Diamant, Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park; David A. Donath, President of the Woodstock Foundation, Inc.; Nora J. Mitchell, Director of the Conservation Study Institute; and J. Glenn Eugster, formerly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and now Assistant Regional Director, Partnerships Program, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

Finally, we wish to thank the three sponsoring institutions—Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Conservation Study Institute, and the Woodstock Foundation, Inc.—for their patience and their far-sighted support of this exploration of stewardship.

We extend our thanks and deep gratitude to all of you for sharing the journey.

Jessica L. Brown
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July 21, 2000

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

"My husband's and my philosophy is that none of us really ever own the land—we only hold it in our hands for a very brief time, and what we do with the land is our gift to the next generation. And some day, we'll be held accountable for what happens on this land…"

— Lynne Sherrod
Colorado

"We had the opportunity to sit together, and dream together, and come up with a shared vision of how we wanted to see this neighborhood develop and what we wanted it to look like… We've been able to keep that vision in the front of our minds and not let other little things deter us from that shared vision…"

— Chè Madyun
Massachusetts

"…People do come together because of the love they have for this building and this setting. I think the love also comes from the stories that are told about it. But if the stories don't get told you lose it, and if you don't have a place like this, the stories don't get told."

— Elvera Vigil Ogard
New Mexico

Over the past decade, awareness has been growing that new ideas and new ways of working are needed to meet the conservation challenges society faces. As reports and books speak to the urgency of finding more comprehensive and sustainable solutions, people such as Lynne Sherrod, Chè Madyun, and Elvera Vigil Ogard have been doing just that in communities all across the country. The stories uncovered during the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study—and there are countless more like them—indicate an important new direction in conservation.

The authors of this report have explored stewardship practice across the U.S. and internationally under the sponsorship of three institutions based in Woodstock, Vermont: Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Vermont's first national park; the Conservation Study Institute, a new program of the National Park Service; and the Woodstock Foundation, a private operating partner to the National Historical Park. This exploration has yielded many insights that lead us to conclude that a stewardship approach offers unique strengths to conservation at a critical time.

Stewardship has different meanings and uses. Within the field of conservation it generally refers to people taking care of land. In this report we intend to deepen the understanding of stewardship by describing a broader set of attributes. Thus, we use the term "conservation stewardship" to describe work that integrates people and nature, respects cultural traditions and historic places, considers the needs and values of people and their communities, and displays a strong sense of place and sense of responsibility toward the future.

Preserving historic, full-service downtowns in California. Photo: Sierra Business Council.

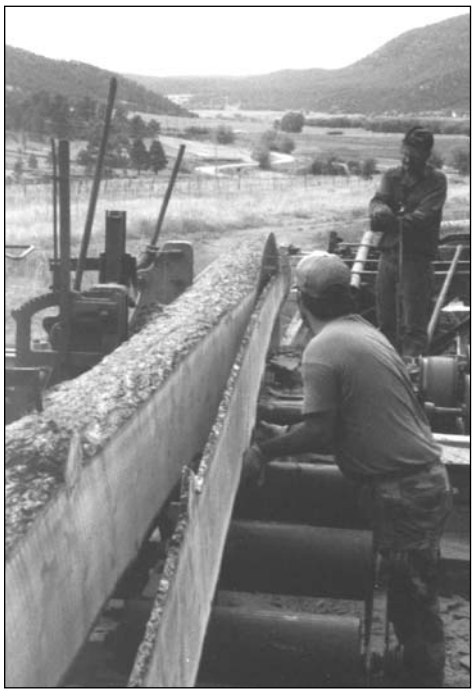
Stewardship, with its human-centered values, is particularly useful today as the conservation community more directly addresses issues of cultural diversity, quality of life in our cities, and social justice. Conservation stewardship strengthens the ethical core of conservation by including a social context of community and caring for people. By integrating social, cultural, and ecological values, it encourages "whole" communities that provide opportunities for employment and a good education, nurture neighborliness and respect, and recognize the importance of sustainability and self-reliance in an increasingly global world. Working within a broader context allows people to build new alliances, fostering cooperation that can lead to greater appreciation for diversity and tolerance for different perspectives and approaches. Tolerance, respect, and new ways of working together all enhance civil society.

The Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

In 1997, a year before Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park opened to the public, the National Park Service with support from the Woodstock Foundation embarked on a process of research and dialogue called the Stewardship Initiative. The first phase of work, the Feasibility Study which this report covers, has consisted of a broad survey of stewardship practice, conducted to inform the sponsors' interpretive programs and to recommend stewardship education and outreach programs that the sponsors can implement, working in partnership with each other and with other organizations.

The present report thus describes innovative endeavors in contemporary stewardship and then looks to the future with recommendations intended to consolidate and inspire American conservation thought and practice in the twenty-first century.

Interviews with people from 48 organizations working in the field of stewardship in the U.S. and internationally reveal a wealth of creative thinking as great as at any time in the history of conservation. The stories collected during the Feasibility Study describe the three common threads of conservation stewardship: 1) a sense of place that is complex and multi-faceted; 2) community-based conservation that is comprehensive, collaborative, respectful, and self-sustaining; and 3) a foundation of commitment and passion that works in concert with a sound scientific understanding to provide enduring inspiration. Although not new, these threads when combined describe an approach that can reconnect people with nature and the land, with each other, and with their communities, and help bring conservation more into the mainstream of individual and community life. The recommendations of the Feasibility Study incorporate this conservation stewardship approach.



Encouraging small-scale community forestry in New Mexico. Photo: Marco Lowenstein.

Rededicating a restored adobe church in New Mexico. Photo: Honey Chapin.

Teaching conservation through theater in the Colombian rainforest. Photo: Ricardo Rey-Cervantes, Fundación Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

Mapping sacred places in Virginia. Photo: Alliance for Sustainable Communities.

PATHWAYS TO EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP

The Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study report identifies a long-term strategy that will deepen the understanding of conservation stewardship and its benefits, boost the effectiveness of practitioners, and promote an integrated stewardship approach across disciplines, professions, and sectors. The recommendations suggest programs which:

1. Enhance leadership in conservation stewardship and build the capacity of conservationists to practice effective conservation stewardship through projects that:

- Raise awareness about conservation stewardship and provide training in reflective, collaborative skills.
- Foster exchange of conservation stewardship techniques and practice.
- Encourage greater networking across the spectrum of stewardship work.
- Recognize and celebrate significant contributions to conservation stewardship.

2. Provide conservation stewardship education to the general public through such projects as:

- A workshop aimed at audiences that can help advance general understanding.
- Educational programs for youth that can be shared with other national parks and museums.
- A traveling exhibit on conservation stewardship.
- Publications and other resources that raise general awareness about how individuals can practice conservation stewardship in their own lives.

"The true importance of Marsh, Billings, and those who follow in their footsteps, goes beyond simple stewardship. Their work transcends maintenance. It involves new thought and new action to enhance and enrich…the past. … We cannot rest on the achievements of the past. Rather, each generation must not only be stewards, but activists, innovators, and enrichers."[1]

— Laurance Spelman Rockefeller

Preserving traditional agriculture in the Sonoran borderlands of Arizona and Mexico. Photo: Native Seeds/SEARCH.

3. Expand the knowledge base on conservation stewardship through a continuing process of participatory research and dialogue that:

- Assembles case studies of innovative conservation stewardship, including in the public and for-profit sectors;
- Contributes to a more accessible vocabulary of conservation that bridges generations, interests, sectors, and cultures;
- Identifies the needs of conservation stewardship practitioners;
- Identifies models of working and factors that lead to successful conservation stewardship.

Stewardship has never been more relevant than it is today. We believe that Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Conservation Study Institute, and the Woodstock Foundation are uniquely positioned to influence the future of conservation stewardship and the conservation movement itself. Although they face a great challenge and an important opportunity, we do not envision this moment resting on their shoulders alone. Action and bold leadership are crucial on the part of many organizations and individuals. The three sponsors of the Feasibility Study, working together and in partnership with other organizations, can help ignite and connect community-based initiatives that will bring stewardship to the forefront of conservation in the United States.

Working to connect local food producers with consumers in Montana. Photo: AERO.

Rebuilding traditional stone walls in the British countryside. Photo: Exmoor National Park.

Introduction

"My husband's and my philosophy is that none of us really ever own the land—we only hold it in our hands for a very brief time, and what we do with the land is our gift to the next generation. And some day, we'll be held accountable for what happens on this land…"

— Lynne Sherrod

Lynne Sherrod and her husband, Del, both come from families with long histories of ranching near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. For nearly 20 years, they have raised cattle on a 1,600-acre ranch straddling the Elk River that is also home to nesting sandhill cranes. Lynne has been deeply involved in building a regional coalition of ranchers, conservationists, and other people in the community united by their concern over the rapid pace of subdivision and development of productive agricultural lands in the valley. Together, they have made common cause to keep ranching families working the land while also conserving stream corridors, wildlife habitat, and majestic scenery. Lynne now works on a statewide basis as Executive Director of the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, the first land trust in the country run by and for ranchers.[1]

"We had the opportunity to sit together, and dream together, and come up with a shared vision of how we wanted to see this neighborhood develop and what we wanted it to look like… We've been able to keep that vision in the front of our minds and not let other little things deter us from that shared vision…"

— Chè Madyun

Chè Madyun lives in the Dudley Street community, a one and a half square mile area in the Roxbury/Dorchester section of Boston. Chè served as the first Board President of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a community-based nonprofit organization working with Dudley residents to create a vibrant, diverse, and high quality neighborhood. Projects include reclaiming environmentally damaged sites and revitalizing business and cultural life. With the Initiative, Chè and her neighbors are building an "urban village," realizing a vision for the future based on local empowerment, cooperation and hard work. Progress is visible throughout the community—300 new units of affordable housing on formerly vacant lots, a town common serving as a gateway to the neighborhood, community gardens, and a mural celebrating the neighborhood's rich ethnic diversity.[2]

"…[P]eople do come together because of the love they have for this building and this setting. I think the love also comes from the stories that are told about it. But if the stories don't get told you lose it, and if you don't have a place like this, the stories don't get told."

— Elvera Vigil Ogard

Elvera Vigil Ogard grew up on the banks of the Rio Grande in the shadow of the sacred Black Mesa in northern New Mexico. She lived in Pajarito, a small Hispanic community, on land homesteaded by her grandparents. Her family built a small adobe chapel, *La Capilla de la Sagrada Familia*, which served as the community's center for many years. After her family moved from the area, the church was abandoned and gradually deteriorated. Family members and other supporters have come together to restore the chapel with help from Cornerstones Community Partnerships. Cornerstones works with rural communities across New Mexico to restore locally valued historic structures, encourage traditional building practices, and reinforce cultural values. Working nearly every weekend for a year and a half, Elvie and others have rebuilt the chapel, which once again has become a gathering place for the community.[3]

Lynne Sherrod, Chè Madyun, and Elvera Vigil Ogard represent a groundswell of local stewardship that offers great promise for conservation in the coming decades. Their examples, and countless more like them across the U.S. and in other countries, provide a sense of optimism and an indication of a new direction in conservation. For the past two years the authors of this report have been exploring community-based stewardship under the sponsorship of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the Conservation Study Institute, and the Woodstock Foundation. This report tells of that exploration, the inspiring stories uncovered, and what this approach offers to the conservation community.

The Watershed of George Perkins Marsh

"I sat on a little stool between my father's knees in the two-wheeled chaise he always drove. To my mind the whole earth spread out before me. My father pointed out the most striking trees as we passed them and told me how to distinguish their varieties. I do not think I ever afterward failed to know one forest tree from another. … What struck me, perhaps most of all, he stopped his horse on top of a steep hill, bade me notice how the water there flowed in different directions, and told me such a point was called a watershed. I never forgot that word, or any part of my father's talk that day."[4]

— George Perkins Marsh

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, the agricultural fields of the Billings Farm & Museum, and the village of Woodstock, Vermont, as seen from the top of Mount Tom. The birthplace and boyhood home of George Perkins Marsh was at the foot of Mount Tom. Photo: Barbara Slaiby.

George Perkins Marsh. Photo: Billings Family Archives.

"Marsh's *Man and Nature* marked the inception of a truly modern way of looking at the world, of thinking about how people live in and react on the fabric of landscape they inhabit. … Marsh was more than the pioneer observer of ramified interactions among people and locales. He also fashioned a compelling depiction of the damage wrought and a reasoned yet impassioned plea for reforms to stem the destruction and help restore a previously bountiful natural fabric. … His union of ecological insight with social reform gives his arguments a lasting force four generations later. Marsh was the first to show that human actions had unintended consequences of unforeseeable magnitude."[5]

—Marsh biographer David Lowenthal

A FEW WORDS ABOUT LANGUAGE…

Some organizations, such as land trusts, use "**stewardship**" to refer specifically to the long-term management and monitoring of land protected through conservation agreements. In this report we use the two terms "**stewardship**" and "**conservation**" to mean people taking care of land or places. When we combine these two terms—"**conservation stewardship**"—we are describing the rich character of the practice that we've encountered in the interviews conducted as part of this study. This practice draws meaning from both conservation and stewardship, encompassing strong connections to place and land, an attentiveness to the needs of people and communities, and a foundation of commitment and values. Because of these attributes, we consider this work to be "community-based" regardless of the size and scope of the organizations involved.

The public has always been welcome on the 20-mile network of footpaths and carriage roads built by Frederick Billings to showcase the managed forest and provide views of the countryside. Photo: Helen Scully.

Haying on the Billings Farm, c. 1890. Photo: Billings Family Archives.

A TIME OF TRANSITION

In recent years awareness has grown among conservationists that new ideas and new ways of working are needed to meet the challenges society faces today. Even as polls show strong public support for the environment, reports of global environmental trends indicate little headway with such problems as loss of biological diversity, deforestation, the decline in family farming, and sprawl.[6] In response, people are trying new strategies and approaches. Many reports and books acknowledge this transition, the authors speaking to the urgency of finding more comprehensive and sustainable solutions to current environmental challenges.[7]

Worldwide, in the past two decades there has been an extraordinary rise in local, community-based approaches to conservation, one of several global trends indicating that change is indeed underway. Governments are working with a variety of private interests, emphasizing partnerships, and opening up new collaborative opportunities for non-governmental organizations. In many instances governments are sharing power through their alliances.[8] Interest in sustainability has grown with the increasing recognition of the interdependence of environmental progress, economic benefit, and social equity. There is greater understanding of how landscapes are shaped by human culture as well as the forces of nature. In the bigger picture, conservation strategies are increasingly bioregional, yet at the same time they include the understanding that working with local communities is a critical component in the conservation strategy.[9]

A brief look at contemporary management of protected areas (a widely occurring means of conserving land and biological resources) provides an example of how these trends have come together to create change. There is a growing recognition that protected areas must be seen in the context of overall land use rather than treated as islands. We see inclusive techniques used such as collaborative management and participatory approaches that include local people in decision-making.

Frederick Billings. Photo: Billings Family Archives.

This all results in management that is more sensitive to local concerns and an increased local investment and commitment to conservation.[10]

In the U.S., community-based conservation is often characterized by local people working together to protect a place or way of life. This upwelling of local conservation is complemented by government agencies offering technical assistance and grants. The major federal resource agencies emphasize the importance of working with communities.[11] In a 1996 report, The President's Council on Sustainable Development stressed that all sectors of society must be involved—government, the private sector, communities, and individual citizens—to successfully realize a sustainable future.[12]

Clearly, community-based conservation has much to contribute today. Our exploration of current examples of this work provides new insights about the opportunities of this approach.

Laurance and Mary Rockefeller. Photo: Billings Family Archives.

The Billings Farm & Museum, privately owned and operated by the Woodstock Foundation, Inc., is a living museum of Vermont's rural heritage and an operating dairy farm. The Foundation and the National Park Service work in partnership to present the museum and park's stewardship legacy to the public. The museum's seasonal educational programs include spring plowing, shown here. Photo: Nora J. Mitchell.

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

In June of 1998, Vermont's first national park was dedicated in Woodstock, Vermont. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park commemorates a tradition of stewardship that has been practiced continuously on this property since the publication of George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature* in 1864. Marsh's boyhood home was on the site, and his observations of the devastation around him caused by deforestation and livestock grazing in the early decades of the 1800s laid the foundation for his later writings. Today, the property has recovered, thanks to the careful stewardship practiced by Frederick Billings, who purchased the Marsh homestead, and his descendants. Mary French Rockefeller, Billings's granddaughter, and her husband Laurance S. Rockefeller continued the stewardship tradition throughout the latter half of the 1900s before giving the estate to the people of the United States in 1992.

The Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study, sponsored jointly by Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and the Woodstock Foundation, and subsequently with the Conservation Study Institute, was undertaken to 1) explore current stewardship practice, 2) strengthen the interpretation of conservation at the Park and the Foundation's Billings Farm & Museum, and 3) recommend programs and partnerships that recognize and encourage stewardship. The study has made a special effort to reach out to people and organizations involved in new and thoughtful approaches to conservation of special places in the United States and abroad, paying attention to work that is bringing conservation to new audiences or extending stewardship activities in new ways.

Organizations Interviewed in the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study

Vermont

Atlas Timberlands Partnership
Food Works
Keeping Track
New England Grassroots Environment Fund
Preservation Trust of Vermont
Shelburne Farms
Vermont Family Forests
Vermont Land Trust
Vital Communities of the Upper Valley

Northeast

Champlain Valley Heritage Network
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
EcoVillage at Ithaca
Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust
Monadnock Institute for Nature, Place and Culture
Northern Forest Center
Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Inc.
The Henry P. Kendall Foundation
The Orion Society
The Trust for Public Land - Good Life Center

(continued on next page)

(ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED, continued**)**

Southeast
Alliance for Sustainable Communities
Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation
The Conservation Fund - Scuppernong River Greenway
The Conservation Fund - Sustainable Everglades Initiative
The Nature Conservancy - Virginia Coast Reserve

Midwest
Menominee Tribal Enterprises
Mississippi River Basin Alliance

Intermountain West
Alternative Energy Resources Organization
Cornerstones Community Partnerships
Forest Trust
Sierra Business Council
Sonoran Institute
The Murie Center
The Nature Conservancy - Yampa River Project
The Trust for Public Land - Nez Perce Project

Pacific West
Golden Gate National Parks Association
Whatcom Land Trust

International
A-Projekt (Slovak Republic)
CAMPFIRE (Zimbabwe)
Ecotrust (United States and Canada)
Environmental Partnership for Central Europe (Czech Republic)
Exmoor National Park (England)
Foundation for the Restoration of the Jizera Mountains (Czech Republic)
Fundación Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Colombia)
International Centre for Protected Landscapes (Wales)
Native Seeds/SEARCH (United States and Mexico)
Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment (United States and Canada)
South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (Samoa)
The Island Nature Trust (Canada)

The Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study explored contemporary stewardship practice through interviews, such as this one with the Yampa River Project of The Nature Conservancy in northwestern Colorado. Photo: Rolf Diamant.

The Feasibility Study began in the summer of 1997, conducted by a team of people with diverse backgrounds in stewardship work.[13] The project team interviewed representatives from 48 organizations that are working on a wide range of stewardship projects in the U.S. and abroad (see sidebar).

> *"We must conceive of stewardship not simply as one individual's practice, but rather as the mutual and intimate relationship, extending across the generations, between a human community and its place on earth."*[14]
>
> — John Elder

Interviewees included nonprofit groups, on-the-ground practitioners and organizations that assist the efforts of others, and private foundations that fund stewardship work. While the organizations interviewed represent only a handful of the many groups working in this field, together they provide an interesting and informative sample of innovative stewardship models.

A LOOK AT THE CURRENT PRACTICE OF CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP

The word "stewardship" has roots deriving from an old Norse word, *sti-vadr*, meaning "keeper of the house."[15] Within the field of conservation, stewardship generally refers to people taking care of land. Our opportunity today is to understand this concept more broadly. The human-centered values of stewardship are particularly useful as the conservation community more directly addresses issues of cultural diversity, quality of life in our cities, and social justice. Stewardship considers the needs and responsibilities of humans in relation to ecosystems and cultural traditions. At the community level, stewardship integrates social, cultural, and ecological values. This contemporary understanding of stewardship offers a fresh view of conservation at the local and regional level.

The term "conservation stewardship" embraces the following:

- An emphasis on the integration of people and nature;
- Respect for cultural traditions and historic places;
- Attention to the needs and values of people and their communities;
- A strong sense of place; and
- An appreciation for the past linked with a sense of responsibility toward the future.

Conservation stewardship as a practice strengthens the ethical core of conservation by including a social context of community and caring for people. This perspective involves the whole person—mind, heart, social nature, and meaningful work. Similarly, conservation stewardship encompasses "whole" communities—communities that provide opportunities for employment and a good education; nurture neighborliness and respect across generations, cultures and sectors; and understand the importance of local values, sustainability and self-reliance in an increasingly global world.

Conservation stewardship celebrates many dimensions of diversity—biological, cultural, ethnic—understanding that diversity brings strength, stability, and meaning to our lives. Conservation stewardship builds new alliances and fosters cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders. Such partnerships create greater tolerance for different perspectives and approaches. A synthesis of ideas from many views provides a fertile environment for innovation and change. Tolerance, respect, and new ways of working together all contribute to enhancing civil society.

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."[16]

— Aldo Leopold

The stories gathered during the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study speak of determination and optimism, and reveal a wealth of innovation. The people and organizations interviewed draw inspiration and courage from their connections to nature and the land. They are finding positive ways to accomplish local change that bring people back as participants in their communities. They are reaching out to neighbors, listening to people who have different perspectives and traditions, and finding that they have much agreement about what they want for their children and their communities. They are working in common purpose to bring their visions to reality. Although these people may not call their work conservation stewardship, they provide a more complete understanding of the power of combining the stewardship and conservation concepts.

The stories collectively describe conservation stewardship as characterized by: 1) **a sense of place** that is multi-faceted; 2) **community-based conservation** that is comprehensive, collaborative, respectful, and self-sustaining; and 3) **a foundation of commitment and passion** that provides enduring inspiration and leads to respect for the land. The promise of this approach lies in the opportunities for building vibrant, responsive, caring communities; for protecting that which is unique and treasured in the places where we live; for enhancing civil society; and for bringing conservation more into the mainstream of individual and community life.

Chapter One of the report, entitled **Stewardship Today**, presents the findings from the feasibility study interviews. In Chapter Two, **The Promise of Conservation Stewardship,** the project team provides thoughts on the importance of the findings and what needs to happen next. The concluding chapter, **Pathways to Effective Conservation Stewardship,** summarizes the recommendations for programs that the sponsors can undertake, in partnership with others, to advance conservation stewardship. Two appendices provide greater detail on 1) the methodology of the Feasibility Study; and 2) contact information on the organizations interviewed, project team members and advisors, and cooperating organizations.

The Pogue, an upland pond at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Photo: Rolf Diamant.

1 Stewardship Today

a. The Common Threads of Conservation Stewardship

During the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study we interviewed people from 48 organizations that either practice stewardship or provide support that enables others to practice stewardship more effectively. In selecting organizations to interview, we sought a reasonable cross-section of conservation stewardship within the nonprofit sector.[1] Although the organizations have a broad geographic span and encompass many disciplines, three interconnected themes characterize their work: **1) sense of place, 2) community-based conservation,** and **3) underlying commitment and passion.** This complex web of interaction among people, land, and community comprises what we call conservation stewardship.

In this section, we present brief descriptions of the organizations interviewed to illustrate the findings. Many of the groups could fit into multiple categories in the discussion. We have placed them where we believe they can provide the most insight to the reader. With a need for brevity, these descriptions cannot possibly convey the full scope of the work of these organizations. We have included contact information on all the organizations and encourage you to learn more about them on your own.[2]

Common Thread #1: Sense of Place

Many of the organizations interviewed display a deep familiarity with place that encompasses the land and the landscape, people, the built environment, history, culture, and ecology. These groups appreciate how both natural and cultural heritage contribute to the uniqueness of the places where people live and work. Indeed, conservation values and activism often appear to be triggered by local connections and knowledge of the diverse elements of a particular place. Many initiatives use this connection to place and heritage to motivate people and build a sense of community around their stewardship efforts.

The concept of heritage in land and culture—that is, something from the past that has value to people today and to future generations—brings to life the link between past, present, and future that is inherent to stewardship. This thread of time and place is enhanced and can lead to a heightened sense of responsibility when a person's attachment to a specific place spans generations or connects to a traditional way of life that is itself rooted in place.

The Champlain Valley Heritage Network works in a landscape that offers scenic views, a rich cultural history, and many recreational opportunities. Photo: Virginia Westbrook.

The **CHAMPLAIN VALLEY HERITAGE NETWORK** works across a nine-town region on the New York side of Lake Champlain to preserve the area's working landscape and to maintain their traditional farm and forest-based lifestyle as affordable for local residents. A strong sense of place and appreciation of heritage guides the Network, keeping them focused on strategies that contribute to their primary goal of protecting their heritage and way of life. Drawing on the region's outstanding history and natural beauty, the Network builds economic capacity and encourages countryside tourism through such projects as a recreation and heritage "mapguide" to the region, a system of interpretive roadway signs, and workshops on farm diversification and agricultural tourism.

The **MONADNOCK INSTITUTE OF NATURE, PLACE AND CULTURE**, located at Franklin Pierce College in southwestern New Hampshire, is examining sense of place and heritage and the role these factors play in where people choose to live. Founded in 1996, the Institute conducts workshops for elementary and middle school teachers on reading the local landscape, and sponsors a conference each autumn on a different facet of place. In collaboration with Keene (N.H.) High School, the Institute is developing curriculum units and a summer enrichment program focused on sense of place with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Institute also recently completed a comprehensive survey in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire. The survey findings indicate that place connections are complex, involving various demographic, socioeconomic, and environmental factors. As just one example, the survey found that geographic mobility early in life appears to strengthen place attachments as an adult.[3]

Exploring Pearly Pond during the Monadnock Institute's week-long "Teaching Place" workshop for elementary school teachers, offered each summer. Workshop participants learn to "read" the pond's remarkable history that includes logging activities, blowdown events dating back to 1890, and 50 years of beaver activity. Photo: John Harris, Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place and Culture.

In 1997 the **WHATCOM LAND TRUST** in northwest Washington state developed and published a book, *Whatcom Places: A Celebration in Words and Photographs*, to further promote a sense of place and pride in the area. Not satisfied with the notion that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder," the Trust believed that visual depiction of Whatcom County could bring common agreement about the area's beauty. Inspired by Wallace Stegner's *American Places*, *Whatcom Places* contains 130 stunning photographs and essays written by a diverse group of local residents. All photos, writing, editing, and design were donated by Trust members. The book won critical acclaim, became an instant best seller in local bookstores, and caused interest in land conservation to rise dramatically in the county.

Participants in the Monadnock Institute's "Teaching Place" workshop select a special site and create a three-dimensional map that includes observations, impressions, and artifacts gathered daily over the weeklong session. Photo: John Harris, Monadnock Institute of Nature, Place and Culture.

On Prince Edward Island the **ISLAND NATURE TRUST,** the oldest private nature trust in eastern Canada, is devoted to the protection and management of natural areas. Sense of place and heritage is especially strong in Islanders, many of whom have left seeking employment elsewhere, but return frequently. With over 90 percent of the province privately owned, the Trust builds on a strong sense of Islander pride in recruiting landowners to permanently protect their property through conservation easements.[4] The organization also creates opportunities for others to participate through an active corps of volunteer property, trail, and wildlife "Guardians." Through these programs, the Trust protects 2,000 acres of Canada's smallest province. Perhaps more important are educational materials and events, which have kept the natural features of the Island to popular attention. The Trust has also served as an incubator for local heritage organizations, and a model for other provincial and local land trusts.

Students reaping the harvest of their school's garden. Photo: Food Works.

FOOD WORKS, based in Montpelier, Vermont, reconnects schools and communities with their natural and cultural heritage. Food Works helps teachers develop locally-based K-6 curricula that focus on their community's story, using historic theme gardens and schoolyard habitats. The school programs involve local residents, especially elders, as aides to the learning process. Food Works also offers standards-based ecological literacy materials and training for teachers, and is a key partner in two collaborative, statewide efforts: the Vermont Rural Partnership, which facilitates a place-based curriculum in schools across the state, and a consortium of educational groups and institutions working to incorporate standards for teaching sustainability within the Vermont educational standards framework.

Participation by community elders is an integral part of Food Works' school programs. Photo: Food Works.

KEEPING TRACK, based in Vermont, provides training and support for teams of local residents who seek to monitor wildlife and wildlife habitat in their towns. Team members are encouraged to use the information they gather to advocate within their local planning process for protecting important habitat. Through training and follow-up support of monitoring, Keeping Track strengthens team members' connections to their local environment and builds a sense of community. At the same time the training facilitates a more comprehensive awareness of landscape changes, and increases understanding of the need to protect connectivity of wildlife habitat on a broader regional basis. Keeping Track currently works with more than 60 communities, some being multi-community efforts, in Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York, and with two organizations in California.

Keeping Track offers six daylong training sessions over a year's time for community teams seeking to monitor wildlife activity in their towns. In this photo Susan Morse, Keeping Track program director, interprets wildlife signs. Photo: Jonathan Blake.

There are many understandings of place, ranging from rural to urban to different cultural perceptions. The presence of different cultural traditions can enrich one's sense of place. Introducing cultural and ethnic heritage through such means as story-telling helps people understand better the place and those who live there. Furthermore, in cultures with a long history of being in one location, heritage and feeling connected to the land and the landscape often become embedded in the group culture.

The **DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE**, located within greater Boston, Massachusetts, builds upon the community's long history and multi-cultural traditions as it transforms an extensive brownfield area into a vibrant "urban village." [5] Community activities and celebrations incorporate the heritage and traditions of its African American, Cape Verdean, Latino, and Puerto Rican residents.[6]

This "Unity through Diversity" mural was a project of Nubian Roots, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's youth committee. Nubian Roots, one of six Initiative committees, is responsible for planning and organizing job advocacy and youth entrepreneurial activities. Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

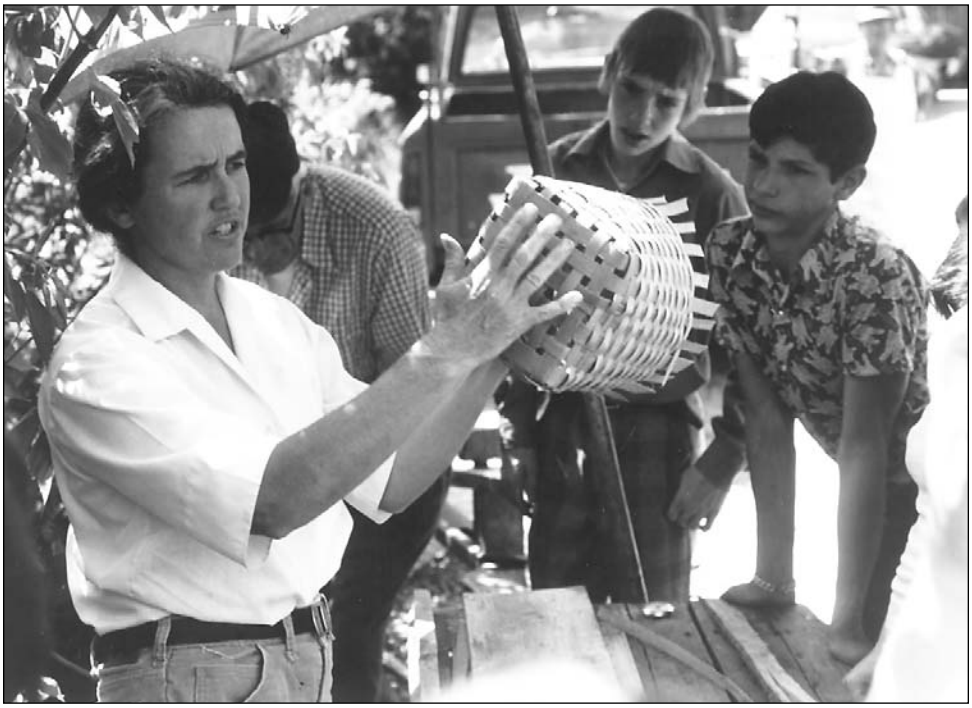
National parks in the United Kingdom, such as **EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK**, protect treasured cultural landscapes that have been shaped by humans for centuries. Exmoor, in southwest England, contains a mosaic of woodlands, farmland, dramatic coastline, and heather moorland of international importance. Unlike U.S. national parks and many others worldwide, U.K. national parks do not exclude human settlements, thus the parks include villages and working landscapes. Sense of place is deeply rooted in both natural and cultural heritage, which are visually linked in the landscape. National park status provides planning and management tools that help towns preserve the unique elements of the landscape that led to park designation.[7]

This valley in Exmoor National Park shows a cultural landscape, from the heather in the foreground to the centuries-old field patterns in the background. Photo: Exmoor National Park.

In New Mexico, **CORNERSTONES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS** works primarily with Hispanic and Native American communities to restore historic adobe churches and other traditional buildings that are central to those cultures. These buildings, usually adobe or stone-and-mortar, are literally of the earth. Both forms of construction require constant maintenance, which reinforces the cultural bond to the land. Connections to place and heritage become more tangible with the hands-on work that involves all the senses. This is further reinforced in the pueblo communities, where the multi-storied, terraced architecture reflects the mesas in the surrounding landscape. Cornerstones' restoration efforts, which emphasize youth training with elders as mentors, have revitalized cultural heritage and traditions for people of all ages in these communities.[8]

Cornerstones' projects involve regular Saturday workdays, such as this at San Rafael Church in La Cueva, New Mexico, to maximize community involvement. Photo: Cornerstones Community Partnerships.

Conservation generally has involved people working to protect the resources that they value. Broadening this concept to embrace both cultural and natural heritage, and the expanded sense of place that they evoke, provides a powerful collaborative tool that bridges interests and sectors. Developing a shared understanding of heritage can build collective purpose and commitment to protecting what people value. Many of the organizations we interviewed encourage this sense of shared heritage at the community level. Others are building it at larger state or bioregional scales.



Part of the Northern Forest Center's mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of regional heritage and culture, including traditional skills and crafts such as basketmaking. Photo: The Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium.

These fourth-grade students in East Grand, Maine, participated in the Northern Forest Center's "What's in a Name?" project which investigated and recorded the stories behind the names of places, features, and landmarks on the Baskahegan Land Company's 100,000 acres in northern Maine. A report on this pilot project is in production. Photo: Ryder Scott.

The **NORTHERN FOREST CENTER** works across the four-state region of the Northern Forest (New York's Adirondack region, and northern Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine) to foster community vitality and citizen leadership. The Center uses the concept of shared natural and cultural heritage to build an identity across an area that has had much in common historically but didn't see itself as a "region" until recently. Ten years ago several corporate owners of timberland sold their mills and millions of acres across the four states. After a two-year study of regional land ownership trends by the U.S. Forest Service, the Northern Forest emerged as an identifiable place. Recently the Center conducted a series of interviews to "articulate the values and cultural meanings of place in the Northern Forest." These interviews reinforce the perspective that connections to place are multi-faceted and a powerful motivator of actions at many levels —individually, communally, culturally.[9]

The **MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN ALLIANCE** demonstrates a different approach to sense of place and shared heritage as it brings together many different perceptions of place. The Alliance connects people of color (African Americans and Native Americans) with traditional conservation groups around issues of environmental justice and basin-wide environmental concerns. The Alliance uses the Mississippi River watershed to facilitate an understanding of how land use or environmental pollution in one part of the basin affects people elsewhere in the basin. As a shared place, the Mississippi watershed provides an important connection among different cultures and a highly diverse array of rural and urban groups. By listening carefully and respecting the different cultural traditions, the Alliance has successfully forged a coalition of widely divergent interests in the Mississippi River.

COMMON THREAD #2: COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION

Although our sample was relatively small, the groups we interviewed cover a spectrum of community, statewide, regional or bioregional, national, and international organizations. Although we did not explicitly set out to interview community-based organizations, we did look for groups whose work was attentive to community values. We found that most of the organizations interviewed, regardless of their size, focus their work at the local level. This brings authenticity—the work becomes real, directly affecting the lives and concerns of the people who live there.

Our use of the term "community-based conservation," however, encompasses more than simply working at the local level. We found repeatedly several important facets: a comprehensive approach, reliance on collaboration, respect for traditional knowledge and practice, emphasis on local self-determination and entrepreneurial spirit, and attention to sustaining long-term stewardship.

Photo: Antonio Martinez.

Photo: EcoVillage at Ithaca.

a. COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

People are looking at the places where they live and work, recognizing an array of factors—including schools and jobs, the quality of the local environment, the sense of community and shared future, the workings of the community—that influence people's quality of life and whether their children will want to stay in the area. Most, if not all, of the groups interviewed implicitly embrace responsibility for the land, the community, people, and the non-human world.

Conservation practice is strengthened by linking together social, economic, cultural, community, historical, and ecological factors. In recent decades natural resource management institutions, including governmental agencies, have increasingly used an integrated approach to natural resource management, known as "ecosystem management," that considers many of these factors. To encounter this perspective at the community level, especially in projects of entirely local origin, speaks of an evolving understanding. Furthermore, this perspective surfaces in a context more understandable to the general public than technical terms such as ecosystem management.

A number of organizations are working to make local economies more vibrant and sustainable, including creating jobs locally or producing conservation products with additional market value. Adding value to products can boost business opportunities, both traditional and non-traditional, and keep more dollars circulating locally. Some organizations have gained community support for conservation by first addressing pressing socio-economic concerns such as jobs, support for businesses, housing needs, or social equity issues.

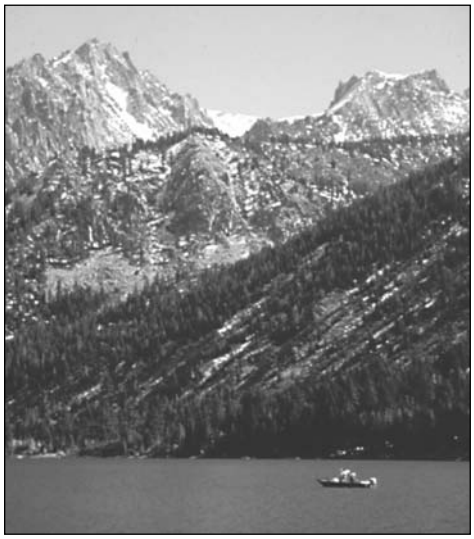
Another example of an increasingly broader approach is the linking of downtown vitality with the integrity of rural areas. The growing interest nationwide in combating sprawl is one manifestation of this understanding. Urban neighborhoods such as Dudley Street in the Boston area, thrive on density. Restoring decaying urban areas and building vibrant urban business centers may increase the livability of cities and relieve pressures to develop surrounding countryside and rural open spaces.

Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

ECOTRUST has worked in the Pacific Northwest since 1991 to support a "conservation economy" that promotes economic relationships that maintain ecological integrity and advance social equity. Ecotrust teamed with Shorebank Corporation of Chicago, the nation's first community development bank, to launch ShoreBank Pacific, an "environmental bank" that provides credit and technical support to local businesses using conservation-based practices. Ecotrust and Shorebank also formed a non-profit affiliate, Shorebank Enterprise Pacific, to provide market development and technical assistance to small rural businesses. Ecotrust and its partners are building on traditional ways of life and sense of place as a means of working toward community sustainability. One approach is to help market value-added regional products that are sustainably harvested or produced. For example, at the mouth of the Columbia River the partners assisted a fish processor and a group of local fishermen with marketing. Now the "Fresh from Youngs Bay" label on salmon is recognized throughout the Northwest as a guarantee of high quality and ecologically sensitive practices, thus adding to the market value.

In its report, Planning for Prosperity, *the Sierra Business Council discusses principles for sound development, one of which is to conserve and showcase each community's natural assets. Sutter Creek, shown here as it flows through the historic gold rush town of Sutter Creek, exemplifies a natural resource that contributes to the community's assets. Photo: Sierra Business Council.*

The **SIERRA BUSINESS COUNCIL**, an association of 550 businesses in the Sierra Nevada region of California and Nevada, is fostering an understanding that the wealth of the region includes social, natural, and financial capital. Founded in 1994, the Council has published two award-winning reports, *Sierra Nevada Wealth Index: Understanding and Tracking Our Region's Wealth* and *Planning for Prosperity: Building Successful Communities in the Sierra Nevada*, both of which it uses to encourage community planning and development approaches that will build the region's total wealth: social, financial, and natural. The Council also offers training to help businesspeople be more effective leaders on these issues in their communities.



The world famous clarity of Lake Tahoe, shown here, has declined in recent years from 100 feet to 70 feet, leading to concern. Maintaining the quality of the Sierra Nevada's natural assets is imperative, since tourism contributes to the region's economy more than any other business sector. Photo: Sierra Business Council.

In North Carolina's intracoastal estuary, **THE CONSERVATION FUND** initiated the **SCUPPERNONG RIVER GREENWAY** to boost ecotourism potential in Tyrrell County, the most economically impoverished county in the state. The Fund's investment goes beyond the Greenway effort, however, to include activities focused on the county seat of Columbia, located at the mouth of the Scuppernong. A decade ago, with the traditional economy of fishing, farming, and forestry in decline, county unemployment approached 25 percent. Young people either left the region or were at best seasonally employed. The Fund helped county leaders set up a private, nonprofit community development corporation, whose first project involved youth training. The youth initially provided community services, such as cleaning up the Columbia waterfront and building an interpretive wetlands boardwalk, a key attraction of the Greenway. Today the youth training provides a range of education and job skills, including natural resource management training, which enables trainees to find jobs in small, natural resource related businesses or gain internships and entry-level positions with the many wildlife refuges and parks in the region.

Youth trainees build an interpretive wetlands boardwalk, now a key attraction of the Scuppernong River Greenway. Photo: The Conservation Fund.

Access roads on Vermont Family Forests member woodlots are carefully located and maintained according to Vermont's acceptable management practices to prevent soil erosion and water quality impacts. Photo: Vermont Family Forests.

VERMONT FAMILY FORESTS was founded on the notion that small-scale "family" forests could be managed for economic and social benefits while protecting the ecological integrity of the forest. Since 1995 the organization has offered workshops on such topics as portable sawmills, solar wood-drying kilns, riparian zone restoration, amphibians and reptiles, water quality protection, and chain saw safety. It also identifies suitable markets for the low volume, mixed size and species timber harvests of its landowner members, so that profit can remain in the local community. In 1998 Vermont Family Forests provided 31 family forest owners with affordable access to independent "green" certification by SmartWood.[10] The certification adds value, providing a marketing tool for both the timber and the finished product. Four member woodlots recently supplied certified wood for the new Middlebury College science center in Middlebury, Vermont.

Landowner learning to operate a clinometer at one of Vermont Family Forests' workshops. Photo: Vermont Family Forests.

The **SUSTAINABLE EVERGLADES INITIATIVE**, a project coordinated by **THE CONSERVATION FUND** in partnership with The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, takes the approach that you can't build resiliency into the Everglades ecosystem without also building resiliency into the economic and social arenas of South Florida. The Initiative is building a common understanding of the region as one interconnected social, economic, and natural system through a series of "learning roundtables," which periodically bring together nonprofit organizations that are carrying out community-based projects funded by the MacArthur Foundation.[11]

In the Jizera Mountains of the Czech Republic, in the infamous "Black Triangle" of air pollution, conservationists are working to restore forests and the soils that support them. The area is also Sudetenland, where German residents were expatriated after World War II. Groups like the Foundation for the Jizera Mountains have realized that it is not only the trees that need new roots in the land. Photo: Siegrid Weiss.

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE JIZERA MOUNTAINS works in northwestern Czech Republic. The mountains are located in historically Germanic lands that were forcibly resettled after World War II. Unlike other areas of the Carpathian range with centuries-old cultures still largely intact, in the Jizera the social and political upheaval surrounding the war severed the connection between the place and the people living there. These problems have been compounded by the Jizera Mountains being within the infamous "Black Triangle" of air pollution. Coal-fired power plants upwind have severely damaged area forests and soils, although the past decade has seen the largest pollution sources shut down or reduced. The Foundation, established to support the Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape Area, soon realized that to achieve its goal of restoring forest health, it would have to broaden its programs. The group is now supporting community development projects, facilitating communication between the protected area's administrators and community leaders, and drawing connections between ecosystem and community health. Following recent severe floods, the Foundation is highlighting the forest's role in water management and celebrating the heritage of the rivers, along which all communities in the region were originally established.

Stewardship groups in Central Europe are trying to help traditional communities adjust to a changing world. Photo: Peter Cole.

In Africa, wildlife is often in conflict with human settlements. One elephant can destroy a small farmer's crops in hours, so it can be difficult to find local support for hunting restrictions and protected areas. In Zimbabwe, the **CAMPFIRE** program has created that support by providing villages an economic stake in the health of elephant populations. Through a process carefully designed to minimize abuses, the program returns proceeds from controlled elephant hunting to villages most affected by the herds. Funds are distributed to the village level, not to individuals. Many communities have now become effective stewards for the elephants, reporting instead of concealing poachers. The program has been most effective in areas where traditional village structures are well preserved.

b. COLLABORATION

Many of the community-based initiatives we interviewed work collaboratively, reaching out to different sectors of society and bringing together many constituencies. While this expands the base of support, it can also be challenging, as many of these leaders are going in uncharted directions with the partnerships they create. A specific consensus-building process can complement collaboration and can be used to reach agreement among widely ranging interest groups.

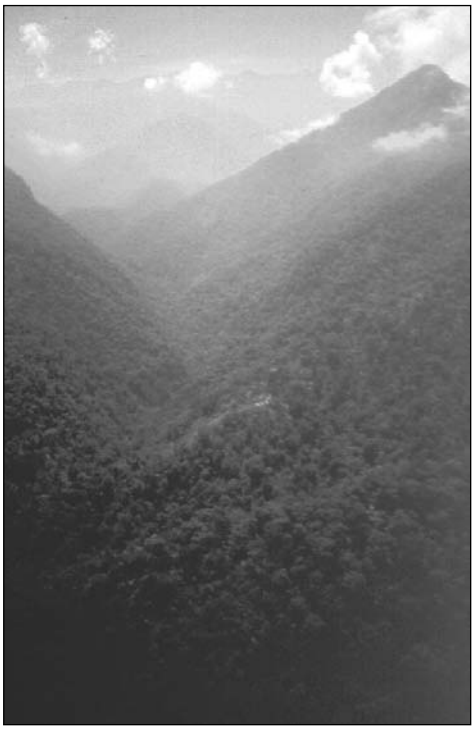
Organizations like the Mississippi River Basin Alliance that work successfully with different cultures can teach us about using language and process to bridge cultural interests and perspectives. They also demonstrate the importance of respecting differences and celebrating diversity. Good communication—including sensitivity to language used and good listening skills—is crucial to successful cross-cultural collaboration. These lessons apply to cross-sectoral stewardship as well, and can increase common understanding, build respect for others, strengthen alliances, and enhance community.

AERO (ALTERNATIVE ENERGY RESOURCES ORGANIZATION), based in Montana and a leader in sustainable agriculture across the northern Rockies, has launched an inclusive process as it develops a model community food system for rural areas. AERO is making more visible the connections between agriculture, consumers, food, transportation, and healthy communities as it engages constituencies not commonly involved in environmental work, such as poverty and hunger programs, social justice groups, churches, hospitals, and businesses.[12]

As part of AERO's food systems project, participants in the Crow Reservation action group kick off their community garden project with a meal of traditional foods. Aiming to bring the Crow community together around food and to boost nutrition, the action group has developed 30 community gardens and hosted two harvest dinners, and, as a side benefit, sparked enthusiastic youth involvement. Photo: AERO.

Brainstorming on community food systems at a recent AERO annual meeting. Photo: AERO.

In the South American country of Columbia, the **FUNDACIÓN PRO-SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA** brought together different cultures, interests, and sectors in a participatory process that produced a sustainable development plan for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the world's highest coastal mountain. The mountain is considered sacred by the area's several indigenous groups and the Fundación successfully brought respect for traditional perspectives into a process that included quite dissimilar viewpoints and interests.[13]



The Fundación Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta works in the extraordinary landscape of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, at 5,775 meters the world's highest coastal mountain. Photo: Ricardo Rey-Cervantes.

In northwest Colorado's Yampa River Valley, **THE NATURE CONSERVANCY** has recognized ranching as an essential component of the Valley's landscape and cultural heritage. Through the **YAMPA RIVER PROJECT**, the Conservancy is working closely with ranchers and many other local stakeholders to enhance the economic sustainability of ranching while improving ranching practices ecologically. Because of the Yampa Valley's outstanding biological diversity, the Conservancy included the region in its nationwide "Last Great Places" campaign. In the past this designation might have drawn local criticism. However, the Conservancy's actions in bringing together ranchers, conservationists, and local, state, and federal agencies to work collaboratively helped to prevent such a reaction, and the new partners have made great strides toward accomplishing their mutual goals in only a few years time.

In producing a sustainable development plan for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, the Fundación used a collaborative process that brought in many diverse stakeholders, including indigenous communities such as the Kogi and Arzarios, shown meeting here at the community center in Bonga. Photo: Ricardo Rey-Cervantes.

c. RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

We are rapidly losing cultural wisdom and diversity in the world today. This is reflected not just in loss of cultural traditions and entire languages, but, in the U.S. at least, loss of such everyday knowledge as understanding where our food and water come from and where the waste we generate goes.

Several organizations interviewed that work in developing countries or with indigenous cultures have programs which incorporate a respect for traditional knowledge and practice. These organizations are learning from the cultural traditions, resource management systems, and land use patterns, which have in turn influenced the direction and success of their stewardship programs. Organizations that practice cross-cultural stewardship can help us look more closely at how we think about the land and resources, opening the door to learn from other cultures.

For example, in the southwestern U.S. the Zuni people view preservation as a concept that "embraces the meaning, significance, and imbued power of things, not the things themselves."[14] Thus, it isn't so much the building that holds importance for them, but the spiritual meaning of what takes place within the building. Efforts are underway to modify the current standards governing historic preservation to allow for this different

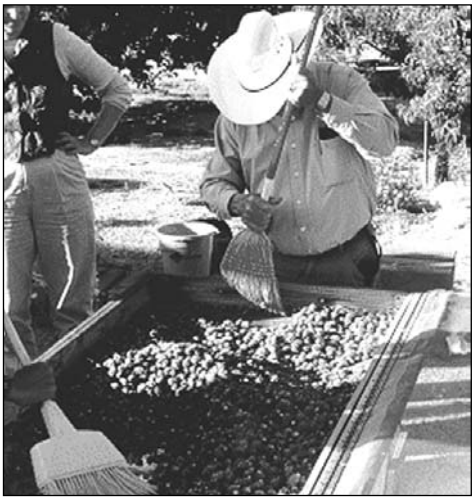
cultural approach to the authenticity of the built environment.[15]

Many people are working today to restore the links among local food producers, markets, and consumers through such projects as community supported agriculture initiatives in which consumers and producers enter into a contract, farmers' markets, projects that link restaurants and chefs with local food producers, and publications that list regional specialty food producers. These all operate on two levels: a practical level, by making locally grown food more accessible to consumers; and educationally, by re-establishing or reinforcing understanding of food production systems, regional traditions, and the benefits of consuming locally grown food. Other organizations are addressing the gaps in awareness around food issues through specific educational programs.

In the Sonoran Desert of southwestern U.S. and Mexico, **NATIVE SEEDS/SEARCH** works with Native Americans to preserve indigenous seeds, crops, and agricultural methods uniquely suited to the desert environment. In addition to rekindling cultural memory and saving seeds that are important to preserving the world's crop genetic diversity, Native Seeds is recording the stories and the ancient traditions around how these seeds and crops have been grown and used for food and for ceremonial purposes. Native Seeds' Desert Foods for Diabetes Project educates about the health benefits of eating the traditional regional foods. The foods of the desert environment were once staples of the region's Native Americans. Native American diets in the American Southwest shifted beginning around World War II with disruption of farming and government distribution of surplus foods. Whereas 100 years ago adult-onset diabetes was unknown among the region's indigenous populations, the rate has since soared to a 50:50 chance of becoming diabetic by the age of 35, at least for some individuals. According to Native Seeds/SEARCH, this is in part because of the highly refined, high fat, and low fiber diet that has replaced traditional foods. Native Seeds/SEARCH uses cultural concepts and stories in its diabetes project in an effort to assist tribal members in reversing this trend.

Bob Stone, Native Seeds/ SEARCH gardener, teaches a workshop on monsoon gardening in the desert. Photo: Native Seeds/SEARCH.

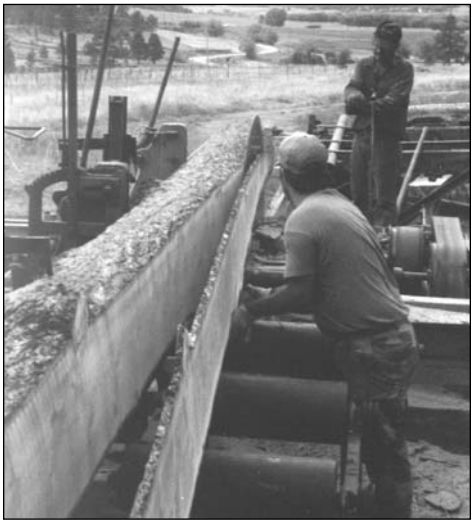
The Native Seeds/SEARCH Seed Bank houses over 600 different collections of corn, such as this pink corn grown by the Hopi. Small samples are preserved in frozen storage while larger amounts are distributed to Native American and other interested gardeners and farmers. Photo: Native Seeds/ SEARCH.



The Desert Foods for Diabetes Program educates desert dwellers about the importance of native foods, such as cholla buds, in preventing and controlling adult-onset diabetes. "Sweeping" the small, fine spines from freshly collected cholla buds before cooking insures no prickly surprises await anxious diners. Photo: Native Seeds/SEARCH.

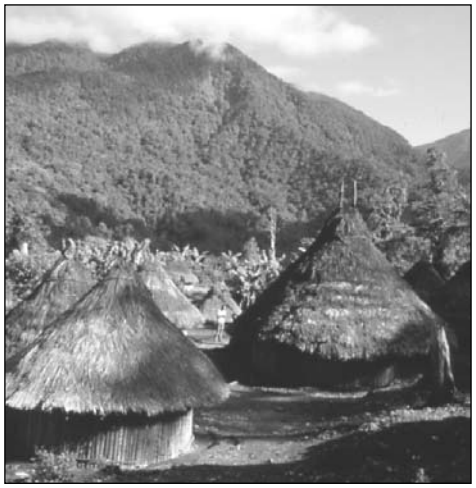
The **SOUTH PACIFIC BIODIVERSITY PROGRAMME** works with villages in 12 Pacific island nations to conserve biodiversity and achieve sustainable use of resources, all within the context of the communal land tenure systems that are traditional to the South Pacific Islands. For people in rural villages, land is seen not as a commodity but as heritage. This view and the villagers' traditional resource use practices have resulted in higher biodiversity levels on communal lands than on government-owned lands. Building on the villagers' culturally grounded stewardship ethic and connections to the land, the Programme works directly with communities on various ecotourism, rural development, and resource use projects. Governments in the region are increasingly relying on the Programme's approach as the best means of ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.[16]

From its New Mexico base, **FOREST TRUST** works on various dimensions of community forestry, including working with the U.S. Forest Service to be more responsive to the different cultural perspectives of the Hispanic and Native American communities in northern New Mexico. These forest-based communities have a long-standing relationship with the land; they place value not solely on the jobs and income derived from the forest, but also on the forest as a hunting ground, the source of the water that irrigates their fields, and a place of social and spiritual importance. Recently, with Forest Trust's involvement, improved communication between the Forest Service and local residents has led to greater trust and an improved working relationship.[17]



Forest Trust provides technical support to small, independent forest-based businesses such as the Louie Martinez sawmill in Gallina, New Mexico. Photo: Marco Lowenstein.

The **FUNDACIÓN PRO SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA** is working to change the attitudes of broader society in Colombia about the value of indigenous knowledge and natural resource management systems. In the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region, the indigenous people are working to restore land to traditional management within the 19,500-hectare Indigenous Reservation.[18] These management techniques help protect biodiversity and husband resources by protecting traditional "seed areas" that serve also as nurseries for certain rare animal species indigenous to the areas.



An indigenous Kogi village in the Buritaca Valley highlands of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Photo: Ricardo Rey-Cervantes.

Producing maple syrup is an important seasonal component of the working landscape in Vermont and maple syrup is one of Vermont's important forest products. Here children participate in the traditional ritual of tapping the sugar maples as part of Shelburne Farms educational programs. Photo: Paul O. Boisvert

From its base along the Vermont shore of Lake Champlain, **SHELBURNE FARMS** cultivates a conservation ethic in people of all ages by working with schools and demonstrating on-the-ground, sustainable stewardship of working farm and forest land. The Shelburne Farms dairy supports production of award-winning, raw milk cheddar cheeses, which were recently nominated for inclusion into the international Ark of Taste, a project that works to preserve the cultural and natural diversity represented by small-scale agricultural and food production.[19] The on-site cheese-making operation completes the educational demonstration of a local food production cycle that begins with cows grazing in the sustainably managed pasture. Shelburne Farms is also taking its commitment to educate about the benefits of local food systems into schools, through a project called the Vermont Schools and Farms Curriculum and Local Purchasing Initiative. This project, a collaboration among eleven partners, will create strong local links between Vermont farms and Vermont schools.[20]

By opening its cheese-making production to students and the general public, Shelburne Farms helps restore basic understanding of where our food comes from. In similar fashion, the organization puts its on-site vegetable gardens and bread-baking operations, which provide food for Shelburne Farms Inn, to educational use as well, helping people draw connections between food, sustainability, and the working landscape. Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

d. LOCAL SELF-DETERMINATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

In our interviews, we noted frequent examples of people taking charge of their future by practicing local self-determination and creating an enabling community environment. This shift can ripple out and boost community self image, and bring forth the collective wisdom, courage, and energy that reside in every community. We saw an entrepreneurial spirit that included inventiveness, creativity, and a willingness to change or take risks. Many people and organizations are learning by doing, applying principles of stewardship to their own unique situations and adapting their approach as they go along.

The **DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE** formed in response to a Boston-based foundation that came into this urban brownfield area with a plan for helping the community. When area residents objected to this outside plan, the foundation challenged them to say how they would deal with their crumbling neighborhood. Residents formed the Neighborhood Initiative, and with funding from the foundation and others, have gone on to create a leading example of a successful, grassroots urban brownfield restoration.

Since 1993 **VITAL COMMUNITIES OF THE UPPER VALLEY** has worked in the upper Connecticut River Valley corridor of New Hampshire and Vermont to encourage greater citizen participation and enable communities in the region to take charge of their future.[21] Vital Communities' three programs foster active engagement in community life. In the **Community Profile** visioning meeting, lasting a day and a half, residents share what they value about their town and select action initiatives to move toward an agreed-upon future. A recent evaluation of 15 communities showed that the Profile meeting effectively catalyzed residents to address critical issues, with most communities now working on several projects. Following a period of community input, **Valley VitalSigns,** a region-wide effort to monitor community vitality and sustainability, recently settled on 22 indicators to track. Already, a trails alliance has formed to coordinate the monitoring of area public recreational trails. **Valley Quest,** Vital Communities' third program, builds a sense of place and community through treasure hunts created by area students and adults. After five years, 52 Quests have been created in 21 communities, with the treasure maps leading to such destinations as scenic views, historic buildings, or ancient ritual sites. A Quest booklet is available in libraries and bookstores throughout the region.

Identifying possible action initiatives in a Community Profile visioning meeting. Photo: Vital Communities of the Upper Valley.

A group of youngsters study Quest maps before heading out to explore the local landscape in search of hidden treasure. Photo: Valley News.

Sustaining traditional connections to the land is an important core principle of stewardship. In Slovakia, A-Projekt works closely with farmers and local communities to maintain vital working landscapes. Photo: Jessica Brown.

In northern Slovakia, **A-PROJEKT** has taken an approach similar to Vital Communities, with whom they have shared experiences through exchange programs. A-Projekt's efforts arose out of public reaction to proposed Winter Olympics skiing in the High Tatra Mountains of northern Slovakia and southern Poland. The group soon realized that if they were to protect the area's environment they would have to offer development alternatives to the region's impoverished communities. A-Projekt has moved forward with projects designed to develop skills in self-determination and appreciation of local resources, such as community visioning exercises, mini-grants for village improvement, support and promotion of cottage-scale tourism businesses, tourist trail development, and interpretation and information centers. In a country still in transition from a centralized economy, A-Projekt is rebuilding social and economic institutions for the sustainable development of one of Central Europe's most popular tourist destinations.

Schematic view of western half of first EcoVillage neighborhood. Each neighborhood will include 30 homes and a Common House. Homes have passive solar features and face due south. Streets are devoted to pedestrians, with cars parked on the periphery. Drawing by architect Jerold Weisburd.

EcoVillage at Ithaca receives thousands of visitors from all over the world. These are German and English architects being shown around by Jerold Weisburd, EcoVillage architect. Photo: EcoVillage.

Traditional lifestyles and natural habitats in the High Tatra Mountains, Slovakia, are threatened by large-scale ski developments. A-Projekt and other groups are working to provide more appropriate alternative development in communities like Liptovsky, shown here. Photo: Brent Mitchell.

Jen and John Bokaer-Smith run a very successful nine-acre organic farm and community supported agriculture operation at EcoVillage. Photo: EcoVillage.

Looking for an alternative to consumptive lifestyles, the residents of **ECOVILLAGE AT ITHACA**, in upstate New York, have fashioned what many housing experts consider the most ambitious co-housing model in the country. Started in 1991 and based on a Danish example, EcoVillage had a primary goal of creating a model village that would inspire others with a concrete example of an environmentally-oriented community, as an alternative to typical suburban subdivisions. EcoVillage homeowners acted as developers, designing their own ecologically-sustainable housing village. Much of the 176-acre property is conserved as open space, with homes for 90 residents clustered on just three acres of land. The building design is energy efficient and encourages neighborliness. This "model" approach has succeeded. Each year EcoVillage hosts hundreds of visitors from all over the world including students and conference attendees, and facilitates educational workshops on sustainable living. A cornerstone of the community is its integration of agriculture through a nine-acre organic farm that feeds over 300 people each week.

In 1969 the then new **Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust** awarded its first grant to **The Nature Conservancy**, itself a fledgling organization at the time. The partnership continues today, with both organizations having learned and adapted their respective work strategies as a result of their experiences in creating the Conservancy's **Virginia Coast Reserve** in the 1970s. The Conservancy's initial acquisition of Virginia barrier islands caused friction with local residents, and the Cary Trust encouraged the Conservancy to involve local officials and the public in the future management and stewardship of the Reserve. At the same time, the Conservancy's experiences along the Atlantic coast were leading to an organization-wide policy of designing preserves ecologically, which required more in-depth scientific examination and planning than the organization had previously undertaken. These experiences have led to the Conservancy's current science-based, bioregional approach that involves local communities in conservation strategies. For its part, the Cary Trust realized early that protecting large ecosystems does not happen overnight, and committed itself to long-term involvement on the Virginia coast. Along with the Conservancy, the Trust recognized the importance of dealing with the broader dimensions of this work—social, cultural, political, as well as biological—and focused its grantmaking on meeting these challenges. Both organizations moved from responding to opportunities, which characterized their 1970s successes, to a more deliberate strategy.

Atlas Timberlands Partnership is a joint undertaking of **Vermont Land Trust** and **The Nature Conservancy of Vermont**, who will practice sustainable forestry on the 26,000 acres of forestland they purchased in late 1997 from a limited partnership timber company. The purchase makes the Atlas Partnership the third largest private landowner in Vermont. In addition to learning first-hand the realities of sustainable forestry, the two partners want to demonstrate how sustainable forestry can help advance community, economic, and environmental goals. They intend to use their holdings to enhance the Vermont timber economy, through such means as participating in local value-added enterprises. The partners also seek to conserve forestland beyond the Atlas landholdings by, for example, trading conserved land or rights to cut mature Atlas timber for conservation easements on other privately owned timberlands.

On Atlas Partnership property in Richford, Vermont, selective logging of smaller, less desirable trees improves the overall quality of the forest. Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

The **Environmental Partnership for Central Europe** was created by funders based outside the region to deliver small grants to emerging environmental groups in Czechslovakia, Hungary, and Poland after the political changes there in the 1980s. From the beginning, the emphasis was on providing direct assistance to community level groups quickly and effectively. To date, the Partnership has distributed over $6 million to 1,800 projects. In the process, the Partnership has become a *de facto* environmental network, linking local groups nationally and regionally. All Partnership programs contribute to environmental objectives and to developing democratic structures and civil society. In countries in transition from totalitarian control, this support has provided incentives for local determination and aided communities in deriving benefit from the region's many unique landscapes. For example, greenway projects across the region, which provide a framework for local initiatives, are designed to restore village identities and provide economic opportunity based on existing or restored resources. These programs are "twinned" with a national heritage area here in the U.S., the Hudson River Greenway. The Environmental Partnership, originally a single program with offices in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, has evolved into a consortium of independent country programs.

e. SUSTAINING LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP

The groups we interviewed understand the need to build local and regional capacity that enables people, organizations, and communities to sustain their work over time. This capacity-building takes many forms: educational programs; leadership and skills training for organizations, community volunteers, and dis-advantaged groups; technical support; and efforts that build commitment to the idea of steward-ship and to the organizations that practice it. Story-telling is one tool increasingly recognized as important in creating and sustaining the commitment to stewardship. Celebrating successes and creating opportunities for people to interact socially are two other ways these organizations build pride and community connections. The cumulative effect is that local groups gain a sound base of understanding and skills, and the staying power to continue investing in community work over time.

FOREST TRUST's Community Forestry program offers technical assistance and skills training to people living in the small, forest-dependent communities of northern New Mexico. The Trust's forestry training provides classroom learning, field work, and internships to unemployed youth, who then have found jobs with the U.S. Forest Service and Forest Trust's own forestry crews, or have become independent loggers and mill operators. The Trust also provides technical support to small businesses and independent loggers who are at a disadvantage in an industry largely oriented to volume production. For example, the Trust has acted as a broker for wood products produced in rural areas and has secured national forest timber sales appropriate to the capacity of independent loggers. The **National Network of Forest Practioners**, created and for years coordinated by Forest Trust, recently became an independent entity. The Network serves as a clearinghouse on community forestry initiatives around the country, offers a unified voice supporting rural communities in national policy reform, and provides a forum for forest-based, rural development practitioners to share ideas and acquire technical assistance.

In the urban setting of northern California's San Francisco Bay area, the **GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION** has worked in close partnership with the National Park Service since 1981 to protect and enhance the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. In one of its many innovative programs, the Parks Association trains teams of volunteer "site stewards" in state-of-the-art habitat restoration techniques. The volunteer stewards then take on long-term guardianship of important natural areas that have been degraded by high visitation and the proliferation of non-native vegetation. The Site Stewardship Program has added substantially to the Park's resource management capacity. In the first five years, volunteers contributed more than 60,000 hours to restoration of significant areas. Equally important, the Program enlists people of all ages, particularly students, in the ongoing stewardship of the Park. This not only strengthens their connection with the special places outside their door, but, as Executive Director Greg Moore says, "Site Stewardship volunteers become empowered to protect the Earth, developing an environmental ethic that reaches far beyond program activities."[22]

Independent producer prepares a load of latillas, a specialty wood product used in adobe home construction. Photo: Marco Lowenstein.

Peeling latillas the old way in Mora, New Mexico. Photo: Marco Lowenstein.

Co-sponsored by the Golden Gate National Parks Association and the U.S. National Park Service, the AmeriCorps program of the San Francisco Conservation Corps connects young people to the Bay Area's parklands by promoting community service and environmental restoration. Photo: Golden Gate National Parks Association.

For 20 years the **PRESERVATION TRUST OF VERMONT** has created and overseen successive grant programs and provided other support that assists local efforts to preserve the built environment and community character. The organization also emphasizes the contribution of the integrity of communities and the rural countryside to the overall character of Vermont statewide. In partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Preservation Trust of Vermont has launched a pilot Historic Preservation Field Services project that provides professional staff support to local volunteers in historic preservation initiatives. These "circuit riders" provide guidance on preservation techniques, fundraising, and organizational and community development strategies. The Preservation Trust has discovered a side benefit to this project—the circuit riders act as an informal "story exchange," sharing what is happening among communities throughout the state, which encourages local activists and stimulates new ideas.

The Freeman Foundation provides funding for the Preservation Trust of Vermont's Barn Restoration Program, which offers grants to rehabilitate historic barns on farms conserved by the Vermont Land Trust. The Martland Barn in Barnet, Vermont, shown here, was a 1998 recipient of a restoration grant. Photo: Preservation Trust of Vermont.

Fergus County Youth Range Ride in 1994, part of a Farm and Ranch Improvement Club project. Photo: AERO.

In Montana, **AERO** began offering small grants in 1990 to groups of four or more farmers to learn about sustainable agriculture. Through these "Farm and Ranch Improvement Clubs," farmers and ranchers have moved from thinking about experimentation to doing it. Furthermore, technical service providers (e.g., Extension Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, research centers) are learning from farmers in the Clubs, resulting in an increased acceptance of sustainable agriculture. Today the Clubs have their own network, maintained by the farmers themselves, and they offer such activities as farm tours, field days, and workshops for the public to learn about sustainable agriculture.

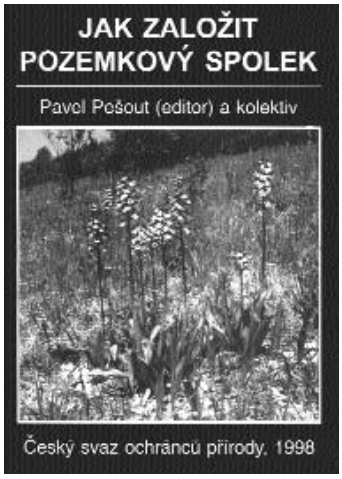
John Weston works on the Old Stone Church in South Reading, Vermont, which received a Preservation Grant in 1998. Photo: Preservation Trust of Vermont.

The **SONORAN INSTITUTE** of Tucson, Arizona, and Bozeman, Montana, promotes inclusive approaches to community-based stewardship that preserve the ecological integrity of protected land while meeting economic aspirations of landowners and communities. With an attention to communication, the Institute has encouraged dialogue and fostered community action throughout the West and Southwest. In 1996 the Institute developed a program with the National Park Service, "Partnerships Beyond Park Boundaries," which brought together groups of national park managers and people from neighboring communities to discuss values and guiding principles for successful partnerships. Based on the premise that traditional National Park Service strategies for managing land must be carried out within the context of the broader landscape and in collaboration with others, this program focuses on cooperative methods to create and sustain partnerships with neighboring communities and landowners.[23] Training sessions continue, and the Institute and the National Park Service are developing a website on the "Partnerships" program.

Using Angora goats for weed control, a Farm and Ranch Improvement Club project. Photo: AERO.

The **QUEBEC-LABRADOR FOUNDATION/ ATLANTIC CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**, based in Ipswich, Massachusetts, knits together themes of culture, conservation, and community in its mission of supporting the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and northern New England. With a commitment to community work and youth service in this region dating back nearly 40 years, the Atlantic Center today offers a range of education and stewardship initiatives and leadership training opportunities. Through these programs, communities gain skills and turn to new livelihoods, such as ecotourism. The Atlantic Center's international program works with partner organizations in countries of central Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. A fellowship program on stewardship, held annually in the U.S. and eastern Canada, has reached 150 conservation and rural development leaders from these regions over the past decade. The organization also holds international workshops, peer exchanges, technical assistance assignments, and community problem-solving exercises in these regions. Participants have returned home to establish new organizations, strengthen local institutions, and lead community-based initiatives that have shaped public policy related to stewardship in many countries throughout the world.

Team building is an important part of the Atlantic Center's Middle East Fellowship programs. Participants are led through problem-solving challenges by the staff of Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center in Massachusetts. Photo: Greig Cranna.



Drawing on their Atlantic Center for the Environment fellowship experience, Czech participants Ladislav Ptacek, Petr Roth, and Mojmir Vlasin contributed to a book on "How to Establish a Land Trust."

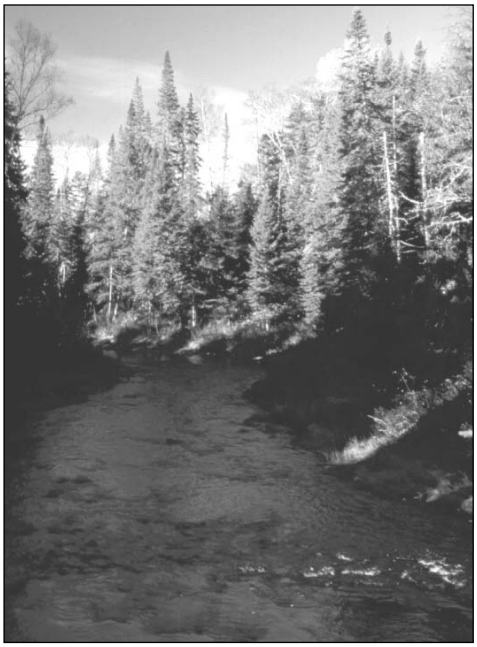
This view from Buzzard's Roost in Fall Creek Falls State Park is one of the Tennessee's most photographed vistas. Until recently, a 419-acre tract of private land in the middle of the gorge divided the Park into 16,000 and 2,900 acre sections. When the 419 acres came on the market, the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation worked with the State of Tennessee and The Conservation Fund to secure the property and transfer it into State ownership, thereby ensuring a seamless vista. Photo: Byron Jorjorian.

The **TENNESSEE PARKS AND GREENWAYS FOUNDATION** is helping to establish a statewide network of trails and greenways. The Foundation formed in 1997 when Tennessee Greenways, a project begun by The Conservation Fund, joined with the Tennessee State Parks Foundation. This merger, which followed a state bicentennial grant program to communities to plan greenways and trails, has increased the ability to leverage private funds for technical support to communities. The Foundation has made a series of small grants to assist groups across Tennessee to connect their communities to nearby state parks and natural areas through trails and greenways. With its "Keep the Country in Tennessee" campaign, the Foundation is boosting citizen capacity to practice local land conservation by producing and distributing 10,000 copies of a booklet about land protection techniques, and by holding seminars on land protection which attracted 250 landowners, planners, and local and state officials.

The **INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROTECTED LANDSCAPES** in Wales takes the insight and experience gained from U.K. national parks, including methods of local involvement and sustaining working landscapes, and offers it to practitioners and other protected area systems. The Centre believes the future of conservation lies in a "community first, people first" approach. With developing countries increasingly unwilling to exclude people from areas designated as national parks, interest has grown in the U.K.'s experience of working with local populations and protecting cultural and natural heritage within a framework of sustainable development. The Centre, established in 1990, offers an academic course of study in addition to providing training, advisory, and consultancy services to governmental and non-governmental agencies around the world.

Long-term thinking is essential to the practice of stewardship, demonstrating awareness of the responsibility to care for the land and communities over time. Many of the groups we interviewed purposefully look over the horizon and plan on a long time scale.

The Menominee Tribal Enterprises sawmill in Neopit, Wisconsin. The Tribe's award-winning forest management practices are based on the principle that timber harvest should be a function of what the forest can sustain rather than market demand or short-term market conditions. Photo: Virginia Farley.



The Black Branch of the Nulhegan River in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom has been permanently protected as part of the single largest private land protection project in Vermont, the 133,000-acre Champion Lands project. When Champion International, a multinational forest products company, put its land on the market in 1997, the Vermont Land Trust assisted The Conservation Fund with the conservation project. As a result 22,000 acres was acquired by the State of Vermont for a wildlife management area, and 26,000 acres that encompasses the heart of the Nulhegan basin was acquired by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The Vermont Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 84,000 acres that were purchased by Essex Timber Company for sustainable timber harvest. The Nature Conservancy of Vermont spear-headed the project's natural resource design and holds a conservation easement on the state-owned lands. Crucial funding for the project came from a legislative appropriation managed by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, which co-holds the conservation easements on the Essex Timber and state lands. The entire project was accomplished for $26.5 million. Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

MENOMINEE TRIBAL ENTERPRISES has been in the timber business in Wisconsin for 140 years and is committed to long-term management. As the manager of 235,000 acres of tribal land, they make decisions about which trees to harvest based on what the forest ecosystem can sustain, not on market demand or short-term market opportunities. They avoid automatic reactions to changing timber prices, waiting until the time is right from a forest management perspective to cut the trees rather than liquidating in response to timber prices.[24]

The King Farm, above, donated to the Vermont Land Trust by bequest, is home to the Land Trust's conservation stewardship office in Woodstock Vermont. The 154-acre farm adjoins Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

VERMONT LAND TRUST gives considerable thought to its long-term responsibilities for stewardship of conserved lands. (In land trust work, the term 'stewardship' refers specifically to management responsibilities for conserved lands and for the monitoring and enforcement of conservation easements.) Land Trust staff bring stewardship considerations in at the very beginning of the conservation process as they work out the terms of the conservation easement with the landowner. Discussing this long-term commitment throughout the conservation process enables staff to understand the landowner's motivations for permanently protecting the land and to reinforce those connections to the land. It also adds to the educational aspects of the negotiation process, and provides clearer direction to the Land Trust in meeting its responsibility, as holder of the easement, for long-term care and management of conserved properties. The Land Trust has also initiated a program to educate subsequent owners of conserved lands about their rights and responsibilities under the easements. As of the end of 1999, Vermont Land Trust had acquired 700 easements, which protect 244,425 acres in the state, and had assisted in conserving an additional 85,000 acres.

COMMON THREAD #3: COMMITMENT AND PASSION

Successful stewardship draws upon a wellspring of feelings and respect for place—the land and the human community—and upon values, ethics, and spiritual traditions. While science, planning, and other intellectual disciplines are essential tools for effective conservation, stewardship is equally rooted in deep personal connections to the land and special places, a sense of moral responsibility toward future generations, and ethics. The mix of values, ethics, and spiritual motivation that contribute to passion is unique to each person and situation. The important point is that successful conservation stewardship comes as much from this deep, heartfelt commitment as from its intellectual root.

Although the motivation for stewardship is highly personal, passion can be inspiring. In our interviews we encountered people and organizations who draw others into their circle of commitment, creating a sense of purpose that is uplifting and energizing. This collective vision strengthens the social bonds of stewardship that knit a community together in working toward a common purpose.

THE ORION SOCIETY, based in southwestern Massachusetts, uses powerful visual images and inspired writing about nature, place, and culture to elevate the emotional dimensions that are critical motivators for conservation work. Both of its magazines, *Orion* and *Orion Afield*, appeal to our spirits and imagination and provide encouragement and insight that help sustain long-term stewardship. *Orion* encourages a familiarity with nature that provides enduring inspiration and helps people connect with the places around them. *Orion Afield* offers heartening stories from around the U.S. of people who are working to build a sense of community and protect their own special places. Through *Orion Afield*, the Society is building an organizational network of community-based groups. In June 1999, The Orion Society convened a conference called "Fire & Grit: Working for Nature in Community" to celebrate the work of these groups. Fire and Grit drew 550 community activists from around the country and was dedicated to the "quiet revolution" of individuals and initiatives "which now number in the tens of thousands and represent…our greatest hope for the future of people and nature in the new millennium."

The **NEZ PERCE PROJECT** of the **TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND** honored a deep-rooted spiritual connection to the land in facilitating the transfer of traditional Nez Perce homelands in northeastern Oregon back into tribal ownership. Although physically removed from their ancestral home, the Wallowa band of the Nez Perce Tribe believed that their spirit was still cast across the landscape. Some 130 years after their forced exile from their six-million-acre Oregon homeland, and after many attempts to get back some of their land from the U.S. government, the tribe was able to acquire 10,300 acres of canyonland to manage as a wildlife preserve. The Trust for Public Land forged a partnership between a private landowner and the Bonneville Power Administration to make this acquisition happen. At the closing ceremony, Carla HighEagle, tribal council secretary, remarked, "The spirit of the Nez Perce people and the spirit of the horse have missed this place. It is good we are coming back."

The Orion Society's 1999 Fire & Grit conference closed with a moving ceremony at the Antietam Civil War Battlefield, where hundreds of conference participants lighted 2,000 luminaria creating a "river of light" that symbolized a vision for the new millennium. Photo: Clemens Kalischer, courtesy of The Orion Society.

The Trust for Public Land launched **The Good Life Center** to perpetuate the philosophies and life ways of Scott and Helen Nearing, renowned for practicing simple and purposeful living and for cultivating a life of the mind and the spirit. Many credit the Nearings with the philosophies and teachings that led to the land trust and organic farming movements in New England. The Good Life Center is located on the Nearings' last homestead, a 4.5-acre farm on the Maine coast, which Helen entrusted to the Trust for Public Land just prior to her death in 1995. In March 1999, after three years of interim stewardship by the Trust, the Center became an independent, nonprofit organization, guided by the Nearings' principles of kindness, respect, and compassion in relationships with natural and human communities. The Center is managed by a resident steward who provides outreach to local communities and schools and to farm visitors, who between May and October of 1999 numbered 1,900 people. For nine months of the year, the Center also sponsors a weekly lecture series on right livelihood, homesteading, and different expressions of a land ethic. The Trust's involvement in bringing the Good Life Center to fruition has led it to examine its own motivational basis as an organization, sharpening its institutional understanding of the relationship between land and people and how land conservation creates social change. This process has been guided by an anthology of readings on the meaning of land conservation, which is now available to the public.[25]

The Murie Ranch, formerly the home of Olaus and Mardy Murie, who with Adolph and Louise Murie helped create and shape the wilderness movement in the U.S. The ranch is now home to The Murie Center. Photo: The Murie Center.

The Murie Center is an educational center established in 1997 in Moose, Wyoming, with a mission to expand and deepen the work of conservation by exploring spirit based connections to wild nature. The Center approaches its work from an ethical grounding that embodies the legacy of the Murie family, long-time conservation and wilderness preservation advocates. Situated within the inspiring setting of Grand Teton National Park, the Center recently launched several collaborative, dialogue-based projects. "The Murie Conversations: Spirit Based Activism for the 21st Century" is a national level dialogue involving conservation activists, public agency officials, artists and writers, local officials, educators, and scientists. They are exploring the notion that our deep personal, emotional, and spiritual connections to wild nature are essential to the work of conservation, yet also difficult to practice given the complexities of modern life. Another project will collect stories that illustrate the Muries' contributions in inspiring a dedication to preserving wild nature, and initiate community dialogues across the U.S. on the value of the wild.

The Alliance for Sustainable Communities created Green Gardens, a public education program to help people redevelop their homes and gardens as ecosystems. Green Gardens sparked the demonstration garden in this photo and involved the youth of this low-income neighborhood in a watershed education program led by Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Photo: Alliance for Sustainable Communities.

The **Alliance For Sustainable Communities**, based in Annapolis, Maryland, facilitates a personal grounding in place that engages people's spirits, believing this to be a critical first step in moving communities to a more sustainable path. During 1994-95, shortly after its founding, the Alliance worked with various federal, state, county, and city partners to produce a series of successive workshops under the theme of "Annapolis Summit: Toward a Community Vision." This workshop series examined the connections between community character, sense of place, economic vitality, and ecological integrity, and how these all connect to a vibrant local economy, sound planning, and working together. This public education project has been replicated by the Izaak Walton League of America in the Midwest. One workshop in the Summit series, "Sacred Places," helps people look at their communities and the surrounding landscape for the special places

Creating a map of places essential to the life of the communities during a Sacred Places workshop held jointly for residents of Buena Vista and Lexington, Virginia, in the lower Shenandoah Valley. Photo: Alliance for Sustainable Communities.

Looking south down the Mettowee Valley in southwestern Vermont, above, one can see the legacy of the Vermont Land Trust's conservation stewardship. The Land Trust has helped conserve 14 farms in the Mettowee Valley, thus preserving its working agricultural heritage and rural character. Woodlawn Farm (middle right in photo), owned by Tim and Dot Leach, is one of three conserved farms along Route 30. Tim and Dot are the sixth generation of the Leach family to operate this 428-acre dairy farm, which milks 350 Holsteins and sells its registered stock around the world. Says Tim, "This farm is in our blood. I can't visualize ever leaving here. I want to make sure my children will be able to make a good living here, too. We hope at least one of them will be the seventh generation on the farm." Photo: Jeffrey P. Roberts.

and buildings that hold meaning for them, the things "that speak of home and heart." Since the Annapolis Summit, the Alliance is carrying out Sacred Places Planning projects in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program. In its workshops and in a CD-rom entitled "This Place Called Home: Tools for Sustainable Communities," the Alliance provides innovative ideas and success stories that inspire people to think more broadly about what is possible in their communities.

In Wisconsin, **MENOMINEE TRIBAL ENTERPRISES** is more than a productive forest providing lumber to a saw mill. The forest has been part of the spiritual roots of the Menominee Tribe dating back to the retreat of the last glacier some 10,000 years ago. Tribal commitment to managing the forest sustainably and respectfully is deeply grounded in their culture and spirituality. According to Marshall Pecore, forest manager for Menominee Tribal Enterprises, "It is said of the Menominee people that the sacredness of the land is our very body, the values of the culture are our very soul, and the water is our very blood."

CONCLUSION

These three themes that characterize conservation stewardship—sense of place, community-based conservation, and commitment—are not new to conservation. Taken together, however, they describe a powerful new convergence. This is the face of conservation stewardship today. It reflects a new direction for conservation that holds great promise, one that reconnects people with place and with each other.

AERO (Alternative Energy Resources Organization) Montana, USA

AERO was born 25 years ago during the Montana coal boom as a grassroots answer to the coal industry. AERO's founders—proactive, practical, visionary artists working to promote renewable energy—put together the "New Western Energy Show" and took it to Montana communities. This creative, practical, "go do it" approach still characterizes AERO's operations today.

As federal policies decimated alternative energy efforts in the 1980s, AERO moved to sustainable, conservation-based agriculture. Today, AERO's sustainable agriculture work is leading the Northern Rockies to better on-farm practices and self-reliant rural communities. This holistic vision embraces growth and transportation issues and community food systems, viewing the integrity of the farming and ranching landscape and way of life as linked to having vital, livable communities.

AERO's early sustainable agricultural work focused on information sharing and other support for farmers who were experimenting with alternative crops and growing practices. In 1990, AERO created a pilot Farm and Ranch Improvement Club program in Montana in which groups of producers and other community members work together to solve their common problems in resource sustainability and profitability. Ten years later, this program has grown in numbers, involving over 55 clubs and 600 farmers and ranchers. The clubs have built a sense of community and accomplishment among the farmers and ranchers. Farm Club members share what they're learning and educate each other and the general public by organizing farm tours and field days. AERO convenes an annual club gathering for additional networking and socializing.

More importantly, the farmers have moved from thinking about experimentation to doing it. Their diverse projects range from developing an ecosystem monitoring process, to connecting producers and consumers, to using hot springs to grow food. Furthermore, technical service providers, including Extension Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and academic research centers, learn from the farmers they work with in the clubs, and their acceptance of sustainable agriculture is increasing. This "co-learning" model is being replicated in eight states, and AERO uses it in other projects as well.

Connecting local food producers with consumers through a farmer's market harvest fair.

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*"*Abundant Montana *is clearly creating a community in which the lines between rural and urban, producer and consumer are blurred. It is no longer just a directory, it is an intentional alliance of people functioning as a regional economic and social community organized around food."*

Over the years, as agronomic practices improved and the farm club network grew, farmers began envisioning ways to market and distribute their products more effectively. A key link in AERO's local food systems initiative (see box) is the directory,

Remembering their roots as an organization promoting renewable energy and energy conservation, AERO members build a strawbale bunk house at the Blacktail Ranch north of Wolf Creek, Montana, as part of AERO's 20th anniversary celebration.

Abundant Montana, which contains stories about 50 farmers and their products. AERO found that the directory's impact has gone far beyond simply connecting consumers and producers. One farmer said, "*Abundant Montana* has made me more deliberate in choosing who I buy my food from because now I feel part of something bigger than me." Another talked about people coming to buy food at the farm as a way to be included in the farm experience. "*Abundant Montana* is clearly creating a community in which the lines between rural and urban, producer and consumer are blurred. It is no longer just a directory, it is an intentional alliance of people functioning as a regional economic and social community organized around food."[26]

AERO acts as a support network, information provider, convener of gatherings, and general facilitator for members' work. It operates through member task forces that form on specific topics and steer the direction of the work. Sometimes this leads to a broader coalition, as has happened with the growth issue. Five years ago, AERO members concerned about sprawl and its impacts on farmland established a Smart Growth and Transportation Task Force. In November 1998, AERO took a lead role in organizing Montana's first statewide summit on growth, "Big Sky or Big Sprawl: Montana at the Crossroads." The summit proved to be the kick-off event for establishing a new statewide coalition to address growth issues and policies in Montana.

AERO has stayed vital over the years by keeping close to its members, understanding that they provide the organization with resiliency, energy, and inspiration. Together with its members, AERO is moving toward a shared vision of a Montana that is self-reliant and in balance.

MONTANA FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVE

Over two years ago, AERO launched the Montana Food Systems Initiative to create community-based food systems throughout the state. The Initiative has set up community study action groups in four different regions, each with a different vision and member composition. A statewide Coordinating Council, which includes food producers, hunger and nutrition groups, consumers, county development agencies, churches, and Extension Service, provides an overall learning and support network and a bridge to potential resources and collaborators.

The study groups took part in a food systems mapping process that helped them to examine the complex problems facing local food systems, develop a common vision for the future, and identify implementing actions. Several groups are now pursuing local actions including building a community garden, shared use kitchen, and marketing cooperatives. Over the coming months, the Initiative will be helping additional community study action groups to form and think strategically about a workable model for rural community food systems.

Profile photos provided by AERO.

CORNERSTONES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
NEW MEXICO, USA

In 1986 rural Hispanic communities across New Mexico were experiencing widespread social and economic decline. Young people were leaving for jobs elsewhere, and the aging populations that remained found it increasingly difficult to maintain traditional lifestyles. The adobe churches, which play a central emotional and spiritual role in Hispanic culture, were crumbling and in such disrepair that many were unusable.

Concerned with this decline, the New Mexico Community Foundation established a program, the precursor to Cornerstones Community Partnerships, to encourage repair of the churches. They envisioned that with technical assistance and small grants for materials, communities would galvanize around rebuilding their churches, in the process reviving traditional adobe techniques and reconnecting with their cultural heritage. But the problem was more complex. The basic skills of building and maintaining adobe were largely lost, since the few elders with experience in adobe had not used it for decades.

Volunteers make adobes at San Rafael church in La Cueva, New Mexico. Photo: Cornerstones Community Partnerships.

In 1988 Cornerstones created a field program that identified people in each community who could get things done and found elders with adobe experience who knew the right mixture of clay, sand, and straw. "Once the program got rolling," says Ed Crocker, then technical director for Cornerstones, "we indeed found a lot more going on besides teaching adobe skills. During breaks community volunteers would tell stories and talk about the old ways and traditions."

Formalized youth training grew out of restoration work that began in the community of Doña Ana in 1988 at *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria*, southern New Mexico's oldest church. This program trained at-risk youth, providing traditional building skills and self-esteem counseling and requiring participants to take GED classes. A civic participation and leadership component was added, and academic content was enhanced through partnerships with educational institutions. Restoration soon began on other buildings as well. Youth trainees traveled to Mexico to learn about producing and applying lime plasters and brought these skills back home. Today Doña Ana is a center for the revival of lime as a building material. Trainees make their own lime putty and sell it to fund the continuing church restoration. Additional training is available in the stabilization and preservation of structures, conducting surveys, and research and computer skills.

Community members apply a traditional lime plaster to the Sagrado Corazón church in Rainsville, New Mexico. Photo: Antonio Martinez.

Cornerstones also operated youth training at Zuni Pueblo in western New Mexico, where traditional stone work was added. The historic stone quarry was reopened and two of the last Zuni quarrymen, both in their 70s, participated as mentors.

"I was able to see how much hard work our ancestors put into building the churches... I felt great pride knowing that I was helping to restore my culture's traditions [along with] their hard work…"

Through a National Park Service partnership, Zuni youth received training at Chaco Canyon National Park in prehistoric ruins stabilization, and have worked to preserve cultural

Youth trainees at Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico, construct a wall using traditional stone-and-mortar techniques. Photo: Ed Crocker.

properties across the Southwest. By the time Cornerstones, in a planned withdrawal, ended its formal relationship with Zuni in 1997, the Tribe's resources were being directed toward rebuilding the houseblocks in the historic district of the middle village. That initiative continues today with the one surviving mentor directing many of the trainees from the Cornerstones program, some of whom are themselves in supervisory roles.

In the Mora Valley, a small business management course was taught in 1997 as part of the youth training program. Afterward, nine youths formed a business partnership to provide affordable services in both restoration and new construction of adobe structures to help preserve the history and cultural traditions of their region. Says partner and trainee Gene Sandoval, "I was able to see how much hard work our ancestors put into building the churches... I felt great pride knowing that I was helping to restore my culture's traditions [along with] their hard work…"[27]

Since formalized training began, roughly 300 young people have gone through the program. Cornerstones' youth training and mentorship process has proven to be a tool for community development and a means of shoring up the traditional life ways that have been unraveling. Through volunteer work days every summer weekend, Cornerstones extends an invitation to, and an understanding of, New Mexico's cultural heritage to others.

Cornerstones, an independent nonprofit organization since 1994, today operates with a remarkable array of partners, including state and federal agencies, foundations, and academic institutions.

"…In the Zuni Mentorship Program, …I learned from our elders to quarry and build with stone, to construct traditional Zuni ovens, and to cultivate traditional Zuni crops… These activities were enhanced by the regular visits of our elders who would share their childhood memories with us, vividly recounting stories as if they occurred yesterday… Every memory was bound to the landscape of Zuni.

"The elders shared their life experiences only after they developed a sense of connection with us. To establish this relationship, we were required to demonstrate considerable patience and good listening skills, but we also enjoyed a lot of joking, teasing and laughing with our new mentors. Once a degree of comfort was reached, the elders took us on a journey into the Zuni past. This relationship provided the opportunity for elders and young people to erase previously held assumptions about each other, a learning process that slowly opened the invisible gate that had hindered communication and the sharing of cultural traditions.

"Working side by side with Zuni elders…, we learned traditional building methods that gave us a heightened awareness of the Zuni cultural landscape. From time to time…[we] were joined by volunteers from across New Mexico, the United States and the world. Together, we worked toward not only the preservation of buildings, but also the rich cultural fabric woven into the built environment. This process of working together with diverse groups of individuals allowed us to learn and share the strengths of our various cultures…"[28]

– Shalie Gasper, Cornerstones project coordinator;
graduate, Zuni Youth Mentorship Program

DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE
MASSACHUSETTS, USA

In 1984 the Dudley Street area of Roxbury, a community within sight of the Boston skyline, contained hundreds of acres of vacant and burned out lots, unsafe and unhealthy buildings, illegal trash dumping, and 13 solid waste transfer stations. This urban decay resulted from white flight to the suburbs, checker-board ownership, redlining practices by banks, and absentee landowners who held on to abandoned land, anticipating urban renewal and sometimes resorting to arson for profit.

That year the Boston-based Mabel E. Riley Foundation, dismayed by a neighborhood tour, offered a plan for rebuilding the community. Local residents, although feeling disempowered, nevertheless rallied behind a single mother who stood up and strongly objected to being excluded from the foundation's planning efforts. The foundation offered to fund the residents' own plan, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) emerged.

DSNI, a nonprofit planning and organizing group, works with resident members and partners to develop a shared community vision and a plan to realize it. The all-local, 29-member board, elected in highly competitive races every two years, reflects the neighborhood's diversity and ethnicity and includes members representing local agencies, businesses, churches, and youth. Former Executive Director Greg Watson describes the Initiative as "more than just about community involvement, it's a strong vehicle for community governance."

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative created a Town Common, shown here, as a way to boost community spirit. Note the downtown Boston skyline in right background.

DSNI periodically leads a community visioning process, keeping alive the vision of a vibrant urban village and ensuring that ongoing work reflects residents' wishes. One resident, a DSNI organizer who participated in early visioning as a youth,

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"The Initiative won't compromise the community process even though it can be time consuming and frustrating. We need to inform everyone, get their input, so that what happens is truly a community decision."

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said, "The only way to make things happen is to dream. Dreams are your best resource." [29] The visioning led to a comprehensive plan that has been key to the neighborhood's renaissance, says Greg. "It provided a way to think differently about the community, to see how the pieces fit together. There's a powerful synergy in looking at the community as a whole system."

The community acted first on pressing physical and human concerns, including neighborhood clean-up and restoring commuter rail service. A powerful, unprecedented lever for change came when the City of Boston granted DSNI eminent domain authority, enabling Dudley Street organizers to force absentee owners to sell abandoned vacant land at fair market value for affordable housing. Control of the land began the process of transforming liabilities into assets. A separate organization, Dudley Neighbors, Inc., exercises eminent domain, and today also manages a land trust and the 99-year ground leases that accompany the affordable homes built on the vacant lots. Residents own their homes and Dudley Neighbors the land.

Sense of place has been central to the rebuilding, according to Greg. Residents envision Dudley Street as a "walkable, pedestrian-friendly" urban village that draws visitors and provides a place for families to work and live. Through the Initiative, residents determine building scale and architecture, and consider both the physical environment and human development. To build the vision, they draw on community heritage, and on the creativity and rich multi-ethnic diversity of Dudley residents.

To date more than 300 of the 1300 abandoned parcels of land have been transformed into high quality affordable housing, gardens, and public spaces. A 10,000 sq. ft. community-owned commercial greenhouse is due for completion by summer's end.

Much community history dates to colonial times. Paul Revere and William Dawes rode through Roxbury as they warned colonists of the British invasion, and there are many colonial-era homes. Many historic buildings, including the only governor's mansion in Massachusetts, are slated for restoration. Residents have discussed creating a one-acre village green complete with native plants and heritage fruits, including the Bartlett pear, brought first to Roxbury from England, and the Roxbury russet apple. They've also discussed unearthing a brook that flows under the asphalt.

Residents view the neighborhood's multi-cultural makeup—African American, Latino, Cape Verdean, and white—as a unique strength. Various ethnic holidays are celebrated community wide, and the neighborhood holds an annual multi-cultural festival. Similarly, residents value participation by youth, who now give "My Town" tours for visitors.

DSNI considers economic development a means to achieve a desired quality of life. Thus, building a thriving commercial center also helps address crime and safety concerns, and productive open land provides jobs. The neighborhood has a community-supported farm with associated youth training; a community greenhouse will begin operations soon, with profits helping further develop community assets. The Initiative drew up an "economic power" strategy and is considering local currency to help people understand the benefits of buying locally.

Initial funding from Boston foundations enabled early successes that leveraged support from larger national foundations. The fulcrum of success, however, has been the local involvement. Greg says that the Initiative "won't compromise the community process, even though it can be time consuming and frustrating at times. We need to inform everyone, get their input, so that what happens is truly a community decision."

In Dudley Street, dedication to an open, bottom-up approach that brings together all stakeholders in the community is enabling residents to transform a decaying urban brownfield into a model livable urban village.

FROM THE DUDLEY STREET NEIGHBORHOOD DECLARATION OF COMMUNITY RIGHTS (1993):

"We—the youth, adults, seniors of African, Latin American, Caribbean, Native American, Asian, and European ancestry—are the Dudley community. Nine years ago, we were Boston's dumping ground and forgotten neighborhood. Today, we are on the rise! We are reclaiming our dignity, rebuilding housing, and reknitting the fabric of our communities. Tomorrow, we realize our vision of a vibrant, culturally diverse neighborhood, where everyone is valued for their talents and contributions to the larger community…"

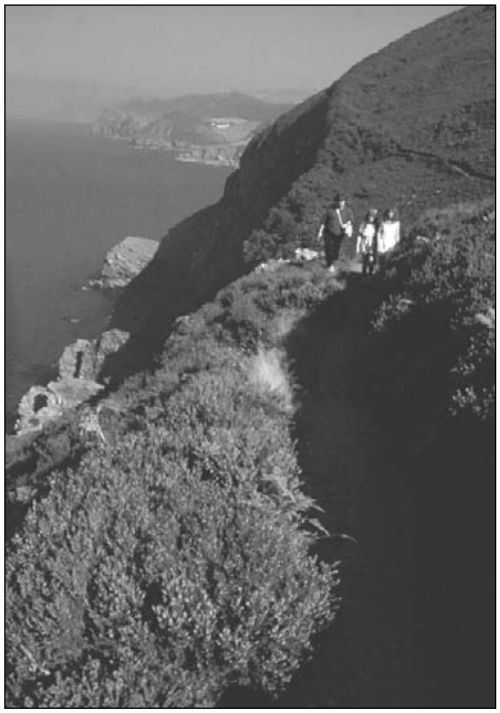
Since 1989 $43 million has been invested in 287 units of newly constructed homeownership units, and $11.5 million in 170 rehabilitated units. Currently 132 housing units have been or will be built on land owned, managed, and controlled by Dudley Neighbors, Inc.

Profile photos by Jeffrey P. Roberts.

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
UNITED KINGDOM

With an emphasis on protecting living, working landscapes, the national parks of England and Wales comprise a unique national protected areas system. The United Kingdom's national parks are cultural landscapes that have been shaped by humans since the Bronze Age. Unlike national parks in the United States, U.K. national parks encompass towns and villages, and their management criteria generally are closest to those of Protected Landscapes and Seascapes.[30] As protected area managers worldwide struggle with balancing conservation and local needs, there is growing international interest in how U.K. national parks work with diverse stakeholders to reconcile conservation with social and economic needs, and manage development at levels compatible with conservation objectives.

Exmoor National Park offers an excellent example of how one U.K. national park works with a range of local interests (including farmers, foresters, private landowners and tourism operators) to safeguard cultural and natural heritage, and manage change in one of Britain's special landscapes. One of the smallest U.K. national parks at 267 square miles, Exmoor protects a landscape comprised of heather moorland (considered of international importance), woodland, farmland, and coastline. Approximately 75 percent of land within the park is in private ownership, and there is a population of about 11,000 in villages, towns and hamlets, including about 600 individual farmers.



Hiking the popular South West Coast Path, a national trail, along the dramatic coastline of Exmoor National Park.

According to National Park Officer Keith Bungay, the central goal is "to look after the Exmoor landscape, valuable for its natural and cultural features, in a way that allows for change—we'll be grappling with that in 200 years. ... It's not just the landscape and what's in it that's important, it's a way of life as well that is different and unique."

The park was designated in 1954 by the central government, despite strong opposition from local authorities. This top-down approach to protecting the U.K. countryside was typical of the post-World War II period, in contrast with today's emphasis on countryside management and stewardship. Over the last two decades Exmoor, like other U.K. national parks, has moved to a more inclusive approach to park management that is based on building partnerships with people living in and near the park.

"It's not just the landscape and what's in it that's important, it's a way of life as well that is different and unique."

This change in approach has come about largely in response to early threats to the park, and recognition of the role of agricultural practices in shaping the landscape. By the early 1970s, agricultural practices within Exmoor National Park had resulted in the loss of thousands of acres of moorland and widespread destruction of traditional hedges. Exmoor made national headlines as a vulnerable national park. National debate on moorland and the status of national parks led Parliament to enact important laws that established National Park Authorities with powers and budgets (1974), created mechanisms to compensate farmers for not damaging the landscape (1981), and set up the Environmentally Sensitive Areas program (1993), which makes funding available for environmentally friendly farming practices. Over the same period, many perverse incentives for environmentally damaging agricultural practices were eliminated, and a wide range of compensation mechanisms and "grant aid schemes" were launched.

Stewardship programs today are absolutely critical to the health of the Exmoor landscape, according to Bungay. Most threats to

Traditional beech hedgerows contribute to Exmoor's cultural landscape.

the moorland disappeared a decade ago. Farmers now are able to tap a support system that encourages environmentally friendly practices and has led to restoration of moorland, hedgerows and other features. The financial leverage afforded by the National Park Authority's ability to provide compensation and grants has changed the dynamic of the relationship between the park authority and local farmers to one of partnership. As imminent threats disappear, the park finds it must develop new incentives for environmentally sound practices.

THE NATIONAL PARK PLAN REINFORCES THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCEPTING AND MANAGING CHANGE:

"Exmoor has always been changing—settlements have grown up and later disappeared, wildland has been cleared, farmed and later abandoned, and all along people's attitudes to Exmoor have changed…[T]hese landscapes all reflect the work of man. The National Park Authority accepts that there will be change in the Exmoor landscape and will strive to manage and direct change so that vital elements and features of the countryside are protected, the adverse effects of change are always minimized, and changes for the better are encouraged, grasping opportunities for improving upon and creating new landscapes."

Keith Bungay identifies the following key accomplishments of the park's stewardship program:

- Exmoor National Park has made considerable progress in reconciling the needs of hill farmers with conservation objectives and in recognizing what farmers have to offer the park, as indicated by the high proportion of farmland under management agreements, and the fact that 70 percent of farmers have signed up for the Environmentally Sensitive Area designation.

- The park has cultivated a strong partnership with the tourism industry over the past decade. The local tourism association recently changed its constitution to include a goal "to create a sustainable tourism that doesn't conflict with Exmoor National Park." Exmoor is one of ten parks across Europe involved in producing a sustainable tourism charter.

- The park has developed a complex array of mechanisms to make contact with Exmoor stakeholders and user groups. These include: Consultative Forums with over 50 user groups; quarterly sessions with the tourism industry; various advisory committees; annual meetings with major institutional partners; and a bi-monthly forum whereby landowners, horse-riders, walkers and other recreational users meet to address public access issues.

Repairing a traditional thatch roof.

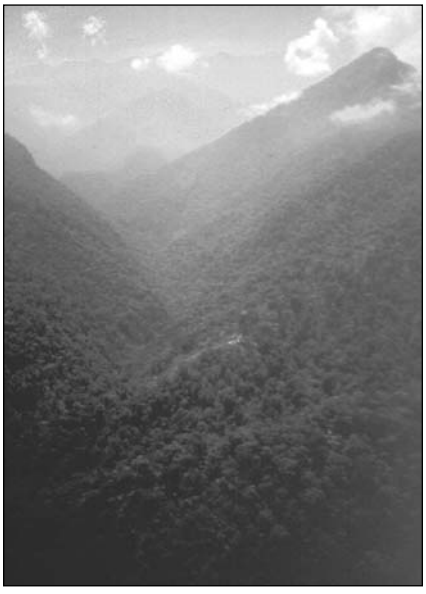
Despite this impressive progress, Bungay notes that involving local people and getting them to understand the importance of the park remains their biggest ongoing challenge. He says, "We won't succeed in our task if we don't bring on board the people of the park, as well as those of the nation."

Profile photos provided by Exmoor National Park.

FUNDACIÓN PRO-SIERRA NEVADA DE SANTA MARTA
COLOMBIA

The Fundación Pro-Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Pro-Sierra), in promoting sustainable development of the Sierra Nevada region of Colombia, brings together many themes of stewardship in a setting of high conservation value and extraordinary challenges. The highest coastal mountain in the world (5,775 meters/18,947 feet), the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is rich in biological and cultural diversity and is of critical importance to the region's water supply. The mountain range is also a region of international significance, having been declared a UNESCO Man in the Biosphere Reserve. The area is inhabited by several indigenous groups, including the Kogi (the last functioning pre-Colombian civilization), for whom the Sierra Nevada is a sacred mountain: *el corazon del mundo*, or "the heart of the world."

Pro-Sierra's mission is "the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Sierra Nevada, through the improvement of the quality of life for its inhabitants." The organization has successfully conducted a participatory planning process in an exceptionally challenging context, bringing together a highly diverse group of stakeholders across an area under the authority of many institutions, in a region where conflicts are common and violence is an ever-present danger. Its accomplishments include producing a sustainable development plan for the Sierra Nevada that has broad support, building coalitions, and restoring indigenous management of traditional lands in the Sierra Nevada. Pro-Sierra is now moving into the next phase of the process, implementation of the plan.



The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is of critical importance to regional water supply and is rich in cultural history, containing 300 archeologically significant sites.

Pro-Sierra was established in 1986 by a small group of anthropologists and scientists concerned with the rapid deforestation and deterioration of the natural resource base of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta bioregion. Today, the organization has three offices (in Santa Marta, Bogota, and Valledupar) and three field stations. Its staff of 50 includes a team of ten professionals with diverse backgrounds (e.g., biology, economics, social sciences, psychology, anthropology, geology), technical staff, administrative staff, assistants and field staff.

Bringing together Native groups with a stake in the stewardship of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

In 1991 following an initial diagnostic study, Pro-Sierra launched a broad participatory planning process to develop a conservation strategy for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The issue of water supply quickly emerged as a shared concern, reflecting the fact that the Sierra supplies water to nearly 1.5 million inhabitants in the surrounding plains. Pro-Sierra held meetings with local officials and over 60 public workshops involving the native communities, the peasant and productive sectors that depend on the water of the Sierra, the inhabitants of urban centers and surrounding areas that use the water, as well as governmental, regional and local entities, and other organizations and political sectors. The organization relied on diverse techniques, including Participatory Rural Appraisal and Rapid Ecological Assessment, while drawing also on theater and the arts.

As a result of this consultative process, the Plan for Sustainable Development of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta was completed in 1997. The plan outlines guidelines and actions to achieve a range of objectives which include "sustainable management of ecosystems; strengthening of the indigenous cultural identity; stabilization of the peasant population;

KEY ELEMENTS OF PRO-SIERRA'S WORK INCLUDE:

- Broad participation of diverse stakeholders in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region;
- Integration of conservation objectives with those important to building civil society, including cultural identity, institutional modernization, and human rights.
- Cross-cultural approaches which promote the sharing of indigenous knowledge and natural resource management systems with other groups in Colombian society;
- An emphasis on engaging decision-makers and political leaders at all levels; for example, securing the endorsement of local, state and national governments for the region's sustainable development plan; and
- Bringing international attention and resources to the problems of this remote area.

strengthening of fundamental human rights; and modernization of institutions." In the next phase, Pro-Sierra sees its role as facilitating the realization of the sustainable development plan.

A key measure of progress is the fact that municipalities in the Sierra Nevada region are incorporating the principles of the Plan for Sustainable Development in their territorial planning. Another important indicator is one that the indigenous people have identified: the amount of land restored to indigenous management and therefore to traditional methods of protecting biodiversity and husbanding resources. According to this concrete measure, about 5,000 hectares have been restored in the four years since the establishment of a 19,500-hectare Indigenous Reservation. A key goal is the restoration to indigenous management of an additional 1,000 hectares, to be funded with support from The Nature Conservancy's "Adopt-a-Hectare" campaign. Priority lands, including traditional "seed areas," have been identified in cooperation with indigenous groups.

Guillermo Rodriguez, research coordinator for Pro-Sierra, identifies a number of impediments associated with attitudes and culture, relating to both the predominant culture and the erosion of traditional cultures. In particular, he describes the challenge that many people, especially government officials, do not understand or respect indigenous knowledge and ways of managing the land. Progress is being made in changing these attitudes and "validating indigenous knowledge."

Pro-Sierra uses theater and the arts to advance conservation and sustainable development.

As the indigenous people are increasingly exposed to the influences of the dominant culture, they are losing their traditional values. Factors include colonization and integration into the cash economy, which is changing traditional power structures and encouraging many people to think of land as a commodity. According to the tribal wise men, "money is corrupting everyone." Further contributing to these developments is the influence of the evangelical churches, which are actively converting indigenous people. According to Guillermo, "as the indigenous people are changing their gods, they are losing their traditional religious principles which connect them to the earth."

Pro-Sierra receives support from national and international foundations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and corporations, including the MacArthur Foundation, the German Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the World Wildlife Fund, and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Pro-Sierra has received international recognition on many fronts. One of its founders, Juan Mayr, received a Goldman Environmental Prize in 1993 for his work in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The Nature Conservancy recently awarded Pro-Sierra the Clifford E. Messinger Conservation Achievement Award in recognition of Outstanding Achievement, Leadership and Commitment to Conservation in the Tropics.

Profile photos by Ricardo Rey-Cervantes.

GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA, USA

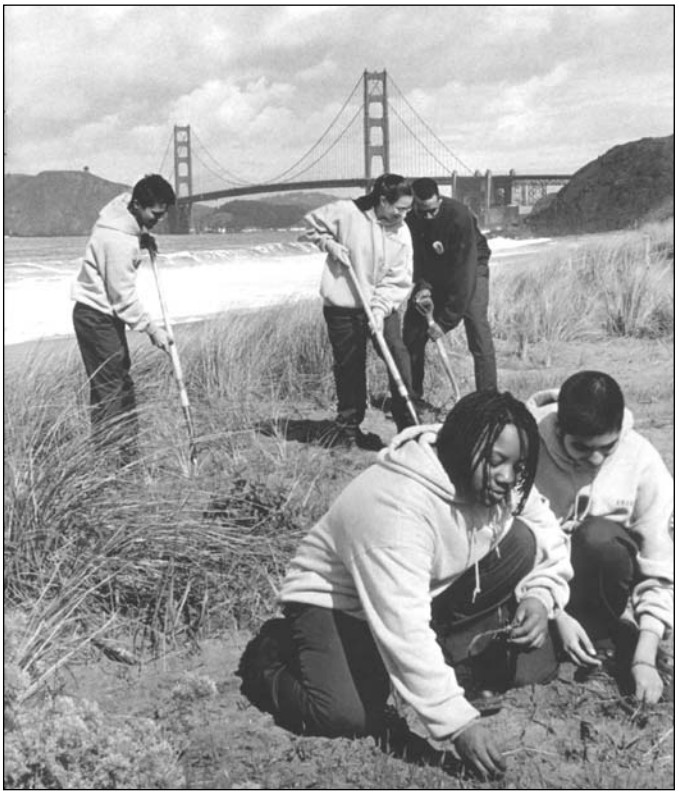
In the urban setting of northern California's San Francisco Bay area, the Golden Gate National Parks Association offers a different model of effective stewardship. The Association is a nonprofit organization that has worked hand-in-hand with the National Park Service since 1981 to protect and enhance the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Encompassing 116 square miles north and south of the entrance to San Francisco Bay, this park is the largest and most popular collection of urban national parklands in the United States, and includes a rich diversity of landscapes, ecosystems, historic sites, and recreational opportunities.

The Parks Association provides a wide variety of support for the management and stewardship of the GGNRA, combining functions that are more typically served at other national parks by separate "cooperating associations" and "friends groups." Over its 17-year existence, the Parks Association has provided the National Park Service with more than $28 million in assistance. The group assists the National Park Service with such diverse activities as restoring native habitats, rehabilitating historic landmarks, publishing educational materials, conducting annual surveys of birds of prey, and helping schoolchildren maximize their learning in the park's vast outdoor classroom. Much of this work is done through the help of one of the largest volunteer work forces in the entire national park system. In 1997, for example, 11,000 individuals donated more than 300,000 hours to care for the park. The Parks Association plays a crucial role in helping the National Park Service to recruit, train, encourage, and coordinate these volunteers.

"The Parks Association is our primary partner in preserving the national parklands which comprise the Golden Gate National Parks. The Association's programs provide an innovative way to reach out to the surrounding communities. By getting people involved in maintaining the parklands, the programs give the volunteers a sense of ownership and commitment. This, in turn, ensures that they will remain involved, informed, and active in future park projects and issues."

Brian O'Neill, Superintendent

Golden Gate National Recreation Area



Co-sponsored by the Golden Gate National Parks Association and the National Park Service, the AmeriCorps program of the San Francisco Conservation Corps connects young people to the Bay Area's parklands by promoting community service and environmental restoration.

As part of the restoration process, the Golden Gate National Parks Association coordinates volunteer crews, such as this international working camp, to remove non-native vegetation that threatens indigenous species.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: THE SITE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

As Greg Moore, Executive Director of Golden Gate National Parks Association, explains, "stewardship is a theme that infiltrates all of our work." Perhaps nowhere in the Association's wide-ranging efforts is this better illustrated than in the innovative "Site Stewardship Program," a community-based volunteer initiative launched in 1993 in cooperation with the National Park Service. The program is designed to combat two serious trends occurring in the park—habitat degradation and the loss of native plant species—that have resulted from high visitation and the proliferation of non-native vegetation. To achieve the goal of habitat restoration, the Parks Association and the National Park Service organize teams of volunteer "site stewards" who are taught state-of-the-art restoration techniques and then take on guardianship of specific natural areas. As part of this responsibility, volunteer stewards are expected to make a longer-term commitment to participate in the program than if they were part of a more typical short-term work crew. In the program's first five years, participants contributed more than 60,000 volunteer hours to the restoration of significant areas.

Beyond its direct ecological benefits, the Site Stewardship Program also provides an important mechanism for strengthening the link between the greater Bay Area community and the park. Students from local elementary schools, high schools, and community colleges participate in the program's habitat restoration work through formal, long-term partnerships that the Parks Association has recently established. Other volunteers conduct a variety of outreach activities to engage the community, including leading educational programs, coordinating workdays, and recruiting new volunteers. And, of course, site stewards themselves develop a strong connection for the natural areas they "adopt."

"Some say when you put humans in the environment, all they do is damage. That has only served to alienate humans from the landscape. Here, we say just the opposite—that humans, with an understanding for and relationship with the land, are critical for its healing."

Marc Albert, volunteer
Golden Gate National Parks Association
Site Stewardship Program

Site Stewardship projects engage volunteers of all ages to help restore important habitat within the vast urban parklands of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

"By providing a structure that enables citizens to protect park sites, the Site Stewardship Program is building an enduring tradition of people caring for the park. Moreover, Site Stewardship volunteers become empowered to protect the earth—developing an environmental ethic that reaches far beyond program activities."

Greg Moore, Executive Director
Golden Gate National Parks Association

Profile photos provided by Golden Gate National Parks Association.

THE MENOMINEE TRIBE
WISCONSIN, USA

The Menominee people live in northeastern Wisconsin on a 235,000-acre reservation held in trust for them by the U.S. government. This forested property consists of more than 400 miles of rivers and streams and 123 lakes covering 4,000 acres. The Menominee Tribe has been harvesting forest products for 140 years.

Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE) is the business arm of the 8,700 member Tribe. The forest provides work for 550 people. One of the most striking elements of the Menominee Tribe is the long-term commitment to sustainable forest management as an integral part of their culture and spirituality.

Menominee Tribal Enterprises' sawmill in Neopit, Wisconsin. The Tribe's award-winning forest management practices are based on the principle that timber harvest should be a function of what the forest can sustain rather than market demand or short-term market conditions.

The history of the Menominee Tribe is a complex one, and not always cheerful. The Menominee, a Woodlands People, have lived in Wisconsin since the retreat of the glaciers approximately 10,000 years ago. They call themselves "Kias-Matchitiwuk" which means the "ancient ones." Menominee was the name given to them by neighboring tribes in reference to their harvesting of wild rice. In early times, the tribe was organized by five clans: Bear, Eagle, Moose, Wolf and Crane. Their philosophy was to live off the land and take only what they needed to survive. According to Marshall Pecore, MTE Forest Manager, "It is said of the Menominee people that the sacredness of the land is our very body, the values of the culture are our very soul, and the water is our very blood."

"It is said of the Menominee people that the sacredness of the land is our very body, the values of the culture are our very soul, and the water is our very blood."

The ancestral lands of the Menominee covered some 9.5 million acres. Their hunting, fishing, gathering, and agricultural way of life changed in the seventeenth century when the European culture and economy took over. Several treaties and land cessions eventually diminished the Tribe's land holdings. The Menominee have struggled to stay in northern Wisconsin and continue their woodland culture and economy despite the efforts of lumber barons to subdivide their land and government attempts to terminate the Tribe.

In 1890 an act of Congress codified the sustainable management practices of the Tribe and established an annual allowable cut of 20 million board feet for the forest. This act was one of the first efforts of Congress to prescribe sustained yield management practices on federally controlled lands and could be seen as an early indication of a national conservation ethic. Subsequent laws strengthened the commitment to sustained yield forest management. Today the forest is managed through the combined efforts of MTE, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Sustained-yield forest management on tribal lands results from the combination of science technology, legislation, agency policy, and tribal attitudes. Permanent inventory plots are measured periodically to monitor the condition of the forest. Biodiversity is maintained through the use of a vegetative habitat type classification system which inventories understory plants to determine which forest cover types are best suited to particular sites. Wildlife habitat is studied and improvements are incorporated into management practices. Management techniques are often altered to preserve endangered species such as bald eagles and

The 235,000-acre Menominee Reservation contains 400 miles of rivers and streams.

Karner blue butterflies. Erosion is limited through harvest boundary design, road layouts, and skidding restrictions. Cultural resources are evaluated and protected.

Menominee Tribal Enterprises has received certification from the Scientific Certification Systems (Forest Conservation Program) and the Rainforest Alliance (SmartWood). MTE is also the recipient of the 1996 President's Award for Sustainable Development. The Tribe is realizing a premium from its "green" certified wood, some of which is being sold in Europe.

Significantly, the Menominee management regime is based on what the forest can sustain rather than market demand or short term market opportunities, which is a much more common practice. The mill does not drive harvesting decisions. During the last 140 years the Tribe has cut more than 2.5 billion board feet of lumber, equivalent to cutting all the standing timber on the reservation almost twice over. Yet, the timber volume currently standing is more than what was there in 1854 when the Wolf River Treaty defined the Menominee Reservation.

The Tribe faces challenges meeting the realities of a global economy. MTE is finding it increasingly difficult to survive on lumber manufacturing due to machinery maintenance costs, the costs of new industry technologies, and shrinking profits in the primary and commodity markets. Their philosophy presents a challenge when competing in markets fueled by liquidated forests. According to Marshall Pecore, to remain competitive

FROM "THE MENOMINEE FOREST MANAGEMENT TRADITION: HISTORY, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES"

"The simplistic beauty of the Menominee sustained yield philosophy has been to cut the forest at such a speed and intensity that the remaining trees would grow and replace those harvested, thereby ensuring a perpetual supply of timber to the Tribe for generations. Some view this notion of sustainability as living on interest, not drawing down capital. Another way of looking at this concept is that the sawmill is subordinate to the forest. The productive capability of the forest establishes the levels of cutting and availability of product for both manufacturing and marketing."

MTE is exploring the value-added forest products industry as a source of additional revenue, whereby raw lumber would be transformed into finished products such as paneling, furniture, and flooring.

The story of the Menominee people and their land represents a unique stewardship perspective. Unlike the typical patterns of forest ownership, management, and resource extraction in the United States, here is a forest enterprise rooted in the community and spirituality of its people. Tribal members support harvesting methods to ensure that their ancestral home is not degraded, and that the land can continue to support the Tribe as it has done for the past 10,000 years.

Profile photos by Virginia Farley.

SHELBURNE FARMS
VERMONT, USA

Spread out along the shore of Lake Champlain in northwestern Vermont, Shelburne Farms encompasses 1,400 acres of fertile farmland and productive forest, four historic barns with turreted roofs, an elegant inn and restaurant, and stunning gardens. At first glance, one might think this is an exclusive resort. But a closer look reveals a very different story.

Shelburne Farms was originally designed as a model agricultural estate in 1886 by Dr. William Seward Webb and his wife, Lila Vanderbilt Webb. Thanks to the hard work and generosity of their heirs, it is today a nonprofit educational organization that encourages people from all walks of life to develop a conservation ethic and become actively engaged in the stewardship of our environment.

The Farm Barn, set within a mosaic of sustainably managed agricultural fields and forests, is one of four historic barns on the Shelburne Farms property. Photo: Clyde Smith.

Every day of the school year, children come to Shelburne Farms from all over the region to learn about agriculture, forestry, natural systems, and conservation. In the summertime, creative camps offer arts, hands-on farming opportunities, and, of course, swimming in the lake. The Farms' award-winning educational curricula developed from these programs are used throughout the United States and beyond.

> *"We put theory into practice. It's challenging, but when it works it adds authenticity to our message, brings to life the connections between farmland and food, and sustains our agricultural traditions and heritage. These things have been lost to most people in our modern culture."*
>
> Megan Camp,
> Vice President and Director of Programs,
> reflecting on Shelburne Farms' dual role
> of stewardship educator and practitioner.

Open to the general public, Shelburne Farms also offers classical music and harvest festivals, tours, walking trails, life-long learning programs, panel discussions on contemporary conservation issues, workshops for practitioners, and a place for reflection. Collectively, these diverse opportunities serve two goals: inspiring a broader awareness and appreciation of working landscapes, and promoting active stewardship among visitors of all ages. Shelburne Farms also embraces its role as an agricultural and open space resource for the surrounding community, an increasingly important function given its location in the fastest growing part of Vermont.

Shelburne Farms' herd of Brown Swiss cows provides milk for the Farms' award-winning cheddar cheese. The herd is fed with hay and grasses grown on the property's rotationally harvested pastures. Photo: Marshall C. Webb.

Shelburne Farms seeks to blend its educational mission with the realities of managing a working farm and forest. The dairy farm operation offers a "whole system" example of education meshing with farming practices. Children learn how the sun and photosynthesis cause pasture grass to grow. They see the grass being fed to the milking herd of Brown Swiss cows. The milk then is taken to the cheese plant, where it is hand-crafted into blocks of cheddar cheese, and aged. At snack time, the children can experience first-hand the tasty, nutritious product of the local food cycle.

These connections are also evident when trees harvested from the property's 350-acre sustainably managed forest are fashioned into fine furniture by Jeff Parsons and Bruce Beeken, who own and operate a woodworking shop in one of the restored historic barns. Visitors can witness sustainable value-added forestry in action and then see and touch the final product. (See accompanying "Partnership Spotlight.")

More than 120,000 people from across the United States and many other countries visit Shelburne Farms each year. Grounded in its working landscape of fields and forest, the Farms clearly is helping to fill an important niche by offering an agricultural heritage and stewardship ethic to the many people, especially those from urbanizing areas in Vermont and beyond, who are seeking a stronger connection to the land and special places. Yet the leaders of Shelburne Farms recognize that they alone cannot satisfy this need. As Alec Webb, the organization's President, describes, "Shelburne Farms should not be an oddity because it is so unique. We hope there will be many more places in the country offering a stewardship ethic and that Shelburne Farms will be just one of many in a network of living, working landscapes."

"We hope there will be many more places in the country offering a stewardship ethic and that Shelburne Farms will be just one of many in a network of living, working landscapes."

Alec Webb,
President, Shelburne Farms

Craftsman Bruce Beeken explains how "character" hardwoods can be used to make high value furniture. Photo: Vermont Family Forests.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: VALUE-ADDED FORESTRY

Shelburne Farms is certified as practicing sustainable forestry on its 350-acre woodlot through its membership with Vermont Family Forests. The certification adds value to the trees that are harvested. Bruce Beeken and Jeff Parsons, co-owners of Beeken/Parsons Woodworking, located at Shelburne Farms, craft fine furniture out of hardwoods harvested on site. Beeken/Parsons furniture, such as the chair in the photo above, is highly prized for both its beauty and its individuality.

Beeken and Parsons want the furniture they build to be true to the nature of trees that grow in the forests around them. They work with the foresters to provide a product that recognizes the forest as a whole system, believing that their design and fine crafting can help promote the value of forests. Only 20 percent of the forest produces "clear" hardwood, that is wood without knots or marks. Beeken and Parsons work with all woods on site, integrating the knots or marks that may be present in the lumber, such as old tapholes in sugar maple, into the design of the furniture. The final products of their crafting reflect not only the beauty and character of the wood, but also the story of forestry.

By creating something of high value from wood that some might call low value, Beeken and Parsons are promoting both the practice and products of sustainable forestry.

SOUTH PACIFIC BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
SAMOA

Responding to the failure of past efforts to establish strictly protected national parks in the region, the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) builds on a strong local stewardship ethic, long connections to the land, and traditional resource management practices. The SPBCP was launched in 1993 with the aim of finding a "Pacific way" of achieving biodiversity conservation along with sustainable use in the context of communal land ownership.[31]

The South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme responds to the unique situation in the South Pacific, where land and sea have always been under the control of local communities, and the lion's share of biodiversity is on communally owned land.

The SPBCP's focus on communal lands and its emphasis on the involvement of customary owners and community leaders is unique. "Customary ownership" means that land and resources are managed by communities according to communal ownership patterns maintained over many generations. In most countries of the South Pacific region, communal lands can never be sold, and are richer in biological diversity than government lands, which are typically being subdivided for development. Communal lands comprise between 80 and 90 percent of land in the region. Because the lion's share of biodiversity is on these lands, SPBCP's work is built on the recognition that "if you want to do something about biodiversity conservation, you have to work with the customary owners."

With this unique land ownership situation in the South Pacific, many local people in rural areas have a long, unbroken connection to the land and sea, and a strong stewardship ethic. SPBCP director Iosefatu (Joe) Reti tells a story from Melanesia

"If I die, my children are going to judge me not by the money I make, but by whether I have kept the forest in good condition."

of community resistance to logging within a 10,000-hectare area of alluvial forest, despite the fact that the logging operation visits the village weekly with "suitcases full of dollars." In the words of an elderly villager: "If I die, my children are going to judge me not by the money I make, but by whether I have kept the forest in good condition." The land is seen not as a commodity, but as heritage.

Today SPBCP has 17 conservation area projects underway in 12 countries. These projects were selected based on criteria which include: a) the proposed area must contain nationally or regionally significant examples of one or more ecosystems of global conservation concern; b) the project must be achievable and exhibit a high degree of commitment by landowners, residents, resource users, and other potential project partners; and c) the proposed area must be sufficiently large and complex to encompass a wide range of the interactions among people and natural resources prevailing in the country. Projects include resource management (e.g., a community-led initiative to ban poor fishing practices), eco-tourism, environmental education, and rural development (e.g., water supply and literacy programs).

The South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme has 17 conservation area projects underway in 12 countries.

Despite its vast geographic scope, the Programme has been able to work effectively at the local level in remote island communities. The SPBCP has an overarching commitment to community participation, with projects decided by local communities. In each of the 12 project countries, a local Conservation Area Support Officer works for local communities under the direction of a coordinating committee made up of local residents. Joe explains that the role of the three SPBCP staff and 12 Conservation Area Support Officers is to listen to the needs and concerns of local people, serve as a liaison between small communities and government, help communities access the resources they need to meet their needs, and help strengthen local institutions.

Joe Reti and his colleagues are currently developing success indicators for the conservation area projects, taking into account their special circumstances. Possible measures of success will include community involvement and ownership in the project, status of biological diversity, impact on local livelihoods, and capacity-building.

The SPBCP supports the existing stewardship ethic in the communities where it is working, building on local traditions which respect natural and human processes. By strengthening traditional connections to the land and its resources, the SPBCP enhances an already strong sense of place and maintains a sense of continuity with the past. With local communities taking the lead, it addresses community needs and values. SPBCP takes a local approach in the context of a large geographic region, thus recognizing connections between specific places and the larger world.

The South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme implements the SPBCP, which receives funding from the Global Environmental Facility, the United Nations Development Programme and AusAID, the Australian aid agency.

A unique feature of the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme is its emphasis on communal lands, and the involvement of customary owners and community leaders.

This program offers many valuable lessons for practioners in other parts of the world who are concerned with community-based conservation, sustainable development, and involvement of local people in biodiversity conservation.

These include:

- Tapping the existing stewardship ethic and strengthening ties to the land offers the best long-term approach to ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the region.

- With their community-based approach, the SPBCP conservation areas are proving more successful than conventional national parks in the region. In each of the countries where SPBCP is active, the governments have accepted the conservation area approach, and are relying on this model increasingly for communal lands.

- The conservation areas offer an example of how the Protected Landscapes/Seascapes model can be realized in a developing country context.[32]

Profile photos provided by South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

SUSTAINABLE EVERGLADES INITIATIVE
FLORIDA, USA

Since 1995 the Sustainable Everglades Initiative has worked to change how South Florida residents view the place where they live and their future. In diverse ways, the Initiative is building the capacity for large-scale, community-based change that can ease pressures on the Everglades system upon which the region depends.

The "river of grass" that once covered 11,000 square miles of South Florida. Photo: South Florida Water Management District.

The Everglades, as a natural system, is greatly diminished from the wondrous "river of grass" that once covered 11,000 square miles of South Florida, from Orlando through the Florida Keys. Today the Everglades is half that size, and much of its water flow is controlled by pumps, canals, dikes, and dams. Except for Everglades National Park, the river of grass has been replaced by agriculture, urban development, roads, and ever expanding suburban sprawl. Few South Florida residents today understand the unique and fragile place where they live.

The Conservation Fund and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation jointly launched the Sustainable Everglades Initiative after a study by the Fund found most federal and state attention focused on the technical fix: how to "replumb" South Florida. The Fund saw a need to engage the nonprofit sector, bring in the social and human side of the picture, and build the connection between hydrology and communities. The Initiative seeks to foster more holistic thinking about the Everglades and lifestyles that are more sustainable and restorative, for people and the natural system. According to Elizabeth Shields Dowdle, the Fund's Florida Director and Initiative coordinator, people must first understand the future of South Florida as more than just a "plumbing" problem, and then address the broader problems that have brought the region to this unsustainable point.

> *"We don't know how to recreate nature, we can only create resilience in the natural system. And to do this we must create resilience in the human setting as well."*

With $1 million per year in MacArthur Foundation grants, 20 community, economic development, and conservation organizations are working toward a "whole system" approach to sustainability. Their projects include providing leadership training at the community level, developing tools to communicate sustainability to the broader community, creating green buffers for water storage, and community visioning for sustainable development. The Sustainable Everglades Initiative connects grantees in a learning network, meeting periodically in grantee roundtable sessions designed to capture the learning from the individual projects. Grantees discuss what they're learning and as a group build upon the insights they've gained from their work.

The Fund brought new players into the picture as well, hosting meetings for foundations and for key players in the real estate industry. The Initiative has connected with public sector programs such as a governor's commission on sustainability and a community grant program of the Florida Department of Community Affairs. The latter sought to redevelop urban areas along South Florida's east coast to slow westward development along the Everglades boundary.

These efforts are beginning to coalesce and bear fruit. With the MacArthur grantees each having their own contacts and connections, the Initiative is now leveraging second-tier action.

More recent grantee roundtable meetings have had considerable public sector participation. Everglades National Park, which has been a collaborator in the technical water restoration plan, is now looking beyond the park boundaries at all of South Florida. The Ford and MacArthur Foundations have joined forces to fund market incentives that will encourage the real estate industry to operate differently in South Florida.

"We don't know how to recreate nature, we can only create resilience in the natural system. And to do this we must create resilience in the human setting as well," says Shields Dowdle. Creating resilience (see box) is at the core of the work. The Initiative creates resilience by helping people better understand their place—the Everglades—and create community-level changes that, combined, can lead to greater sustainability throughout the region.

"Growth has been the most important economic sector and the primary engine of unsustainability. It can also be the greatest factor in change, if the political will and market incentives that favor sustainability can both be mustered."

A 1997 report on the Sustainable Everglades Initiative to the MacArthur Foundation Board of Directors stated that the Initiative has been building the capital and connectivity of people working for sustainability in South Florida. The MacArthur grants have helped to create new knowledge, tools and skills—core capacities the report says—for designing sustainable communities and regions.[33] Change is emerging as more people understand they have a stake in what happens and act on that understanding in new, more collaborative ways.

Looking ahead, Shields Dowdle outlines two key challenges. First is to find better means of communication that allow everyone to work together. This involves clearer language as well as better listening skills so that people can hear the concerns of others and connect these concerns within the web of sustainability. The second challenge is to develop more sustainable practices within the real estate market. Says Shields Dowdle, "Growth has been the most important economic sector and the primary engine of unsustainability. It can also be the greatest factor in change, if the political will and market incentives that favor sustainability can both be mustered."

CREATING RESILIENCE

Wetlands ecologist and MacArthur grantee Lance Gunderson explains that resilience allows a system, natural or otherwise, to respond to surprises that always come in a complex world. According to Gunderson, natural and social systems are composed of elements and dynamics that occur at different scales and patterns. Change can occur incrementally in long waves, or rapidly in bursts triggered by opportunities or stresses. Small changes can have enormous impacts, and changes at one scale can trigger important changes at another scale. Resilience involves the capacity to handle these waves of change without destabilizing the system. Thus, the attempt to create water preservation areas for the Everglades adds to the system's resilience. Helping people to…design for the future based on sustainability and "whole-system" principles, helps create resilience in a community and in the social system.[34]

Except for Everglades National Park, the "river of grass" has been replaced by urban development and ever-expanding suburban sprawl. Photo: The Miami Herald.

C. Stewardship Today: The View of Four Grant-making Institutions

Seeking to understand how grant-making institutions view contemporary stewardship and the trends and challenges they see in conservation, we interviewed four foundations as part of the Stewardship Initiative Feasibility Study: the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust in New York City; Henry P. Kendall Foundation in Boston; the New England Grassroots Environment Fund in Montpelier, Vermont; and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York City.

All four foundations regularly fund conservation work, including some of the organizations also interviewed during the feasibility study. These foundations were selected to display a diversity in grant-making focus and programs. The structures of these institutions and their financial origins vary from a charitable trust with a 50-year life span, to traditional foundations, to a fund created by a consortium of funding sources.

Although the four foundations have different organizational structures and geographical perspectives, they share certain characteristics and philosophies.

Dynamic interaction. Both philosophically and practically, the four foundations display a common commitment and enthusiasm for learning and creating environments for discovery. Staff and boards seek knowledge from myriad sources, often outside their areas of expertise. This fundamental commitment stimulates well-considered strategic thinking. Enthusiasm, curiosity, and a willingness to share information, experience, and wisdom characterize these funders.

Seeing the "big picture." All four funders operate from a big picture perspective, looking over the horizon to anticipate challenges. They all reflect an understanding that today's problems and their solutions are complex, multifaceted, and interconnected. Several note that the global marketplace, instant communications, and growing interdependence blur the boundaries and distinctions between local, national, and international issues and problems. To understand change and propose workable solutions requires a "telescoping" perspective that can take a broad, international view at one moment and in the next moment zoom in on a local understanding. With varying degrees of connection, each organization sees nature, culture, economy, and community as linked. Working from an ecosystem and human perspective leads to integration and synthesis of complex issues across a broad geographic plane.

To understand change and propose workable solutions requires a "telescoping" perspective that can take a broad, international view at one moment and in the next moment zoom in on a local understanding.

Stewardship on a large stage. Seeing the world through a compound lens, the group embraces an integrated, inclusive, and collaborative view of stewardship. Although they understand stewardship as place-based, their various perceptions include security and health dimensions (ecosystem and human health), safety, sound economies and employment, social equity, and the role of civil society in democracies. Simply put, they see the issues and solutions as a series of dynamic, interacting webs that require approaches based on a comprehensive understanding of the whole system. One grant-maker, in particular, describes its efforts to understand the issues surrounding good stewardship and how both stewardship practice and organizations must adapt to changing conditions.

All four organizations incorporate a notion of service in their perspectives of stewardship—of responsibility to human and natural communities—both in their own conduct and what they look for in grantees. As a group they model a type of stewardship that depends on knowledge and curiosity, a passion and spiritual connection to work, and a willingness and skill to communicate and share experiences with others, often through stories.

Connections with community-based work. Each organization emphasized the critical role of collaboration and partnership, among grant-makers as well as recipients. One funder works to create "vertically integrated" problem-solving teams, linking local groups with regional and/or national organizations. It believes that this approach increases everyone's understanding of the problem, and that such partnerships can devise solutions that are ecosystem level in scope, but respond to community concerns and needs. Another

Sustainable resource use must involve environmental stewardship that is consciously place-based and culturally appropriate as well as ecologically and economically sound.

funder, encouraging grassroots level collaboration and linkages, argues that the integrity of local people and organizations must be respected and engaged to achieve real success. They all believe that including groups not traditionally involved in environmental problem-solving helps create vital, energetic initiative. To achieve sustainable use of natural resources requires an engagement with social needs, where citizens shape the changes and decisions that affect their daily lives.

Long-term commitment to building capacity. Solving complex issues requires long-term commitment by funders. They see no quick fixes and approach change incrementally, believing that building institutional capacity and strategic thinking is key. Their parallel emphasis on building the next generation of leaders and stewards reflects this commitment to long-term change as well. They recognize that human resources and energy, together with physical and financial commitment, are needed over time to redress historical problems.

Challenges in the future. Although each foundation addresses specific issues, they all emphasize big picture challenges. They see stewardship as becoming more intense in the United States and abroad as the forces of change grow stronger and our choices narrow. One funder said that we need new ways to analyze critical change at local, national, and international levels. This same person is concerned about the export of American culture, and the threat this poses to indigenous culture, and expressed the view that sustainable resource use must involve environmental stewardship that is consciously place-based and culturally appropriate as well as ecologically and economically sound.

As a group they are concerned about the next generations of stewards and philanthropists and how to "sustain sustainability." One interviewee asked, "…where do we find individuals who see their stewardship in broad public service terms?" This person sees a need, within the philanthropic community and society as a whole, to identify people who recognize the relationship between conservation in a broad sense, nurturing a civil and democratic society, the joining of individual and public benefits through philanthropy, and a sense of place and stewardship.

They each believe that education is key to sustaining good stewardship over time, and that the need to create environmental understanding exists throughout all levels of the educational system and with the general public. A few expressed the view that

Education is key to sustaining good stewardship over time.

nonprofit organizations had not been as effective as they could be in educational efforts, especially with issues relating to civil society and a broadly defined notion of stewardship. One funder sees national parks as well-positioned to play a larger role in educating on these issues. Regarding the broad assumption that people gain environmental awareness as they go through life, one in the group thinks this notion, at best, means we are both uninformed and misinformed about how individual and collective actions play out in our culture, economies, society, and nature. Several funders expressed the need to recognize the

There is a critical need to build bridges among disciplines, generations, and cultures.

essential links between urban and rural places, and discover ways to educate city dwellers to their reliance on the countryside.

Related to the education issue, there is a critical need to build bridges among disciplines, generations, and cultures. Language is a barrier; those working in environmental and stewardship activities must find simple, concise, and stimulating ways to communicate the issues and the complexities. There is a challenge in addressing intergenerational issues within the realm of stewardship and civil society, and also in the complex governance issues that exist at every level—local, national, and international.

2 The Promise of Conservation Stewardship

The previous sections discussed conservation stewardship as illustrated by the organizations interviewed. In this section the project team explores further the insights gained, the opportunities inherent in the interdisciplinary character of conservation stewardship, and ways in which this approach can assist conservationists to become more effective. We also recognize challenges in related disciplines that are important for conservation.

Sense of place is complex and dynamic, and plays an essential strategic role in conservation stewardship. The many aspects of place that add meaning for people—natural beauty, cultural history, the buildings, landscape, topography, scenic views, and a community's traditions, stories, and social customs—all offer avenues for engaging people in community-based conservation. The organizations interviewed during the Feasibility Study have provided information, inspiration, models of community engagement, and educational tools which can enhance our understanding of the role that place plays in stewardship and can direct us toward more effective place-based action.

The initial affinity to place is just the beginning of a dynamic and powerful process that we are still in the early stages of discovering. In its research on regional identity, the Northern Forest Center found that "place is both a creator and the creation of human experience…" and that sense of place "can be felt individually, communally, culturally, and across geographic scales…"[1] This suggests numerous opportunities to create connections with place at various levels that can help people to become more active in the stewardship of their communities and special places. We must continue to explore how sense of place operates—with individuals, within rural and urban communities, and within different cultural perceptions—and then share the learning across the spectrum of stewardship work.

Community-based conservation helps people integrate conservation into their lives and their community. In the decades surrounding Earth Day 1970, the conservation movement focused largely on raising awareness with the general public and decision-makers of the scientific justification for environmental programs. This led to a more informed and responsive political process and to an array of important governmental programs aimed at protecting natural resources and the public right to a healthy environment. The process also resulted in a more informed and supportive public, yet this support too often is for conservation in the abstract. Many people have difficulty understanding how conservation relates directly to their everyday lives.

Community-based conservation helps brings the concept of conservation home, enabling people to understand and participate within the context of their lives and their community. Over time, this more personalized understanding can help shift conservation more into the mainstream of society.

"There are three parts to place-based work. We need to be value-bound to Leopold's land ethic; educationally bound to continual learning, and spiritually grounded in an individual's relationship to nature and creation."

— Laurie Lane-Zucker
Managing Director, The Orion Society

Community-based conservation is increasing dramatically, but there are many opportunities to expand the practice and the understanding of its importance. Networks exist within certain circles of conservation work, such as land trusts and sustainable agriculture groups, and many environmental groups maintain activist networks. An especially promising linkage, launched several years ago by the Orion Society, is the Orion Grassroots Network. The Network connects citizens and organizations working in their communities on environmental concerns, and the quarterly *Orion Afield* shares their stories and celebrates their achievements.

Working in partnership to connect these networking efforts across the broad spectrum of conservation stewardship explored in the Feasibility Study would provide opportunities for people to share their stories and techniques more widely, helping them understand the similarities of their work and goals. This knowledge would give a powerful boost to conservation stewardship and to the community-based conservation movement.

We must develop conservation terminology that is more inclusive and reflects the values and importance of conservation to society. The distance that people often feel toward conservation principles is compounded by the limitations of our language. Words so important to conservation today—biodiversity, ecosystems, ecology, sustainability, bioregionalism—have grown out of the scientific understanding of environmental problems. These words are impersonal and do not "invite in" the non-scientific public, creating a hindrance to bringing conservation practice into the mainstream. The need for more accessible language becomes especially evident as conservationists reach out to new audiences and constituencies.

Moreover, the interpretation given to the words, the nuances and the meaning, varies not only with the listener or the reader, but also with the person speaking or writing. Author Rick Bass has described his experience with this particular predicament of language in writing about the Yaak Valley of northwestern Montana, where he lives. "How should I speak of my love for and of [the Yaak], and all deep, dark forests? How can I best convince the world of my need for unmanaged forests? Should I speak with the precision of science and reason, which will always lag behind the immediacy of the here and now…? Or should I speak of my need by concentrating on the deeper taproots of emotion?…What words, as a writer, do I choose?"[2]

Many conservationists are thinking about language and communication. They are looking to bridge interests and discuss complex topics in ways that convey the appropriate meaning and with language that reaches more people. Making this search more explicit—a focus of ongoing dialogue and research—would help immeasurably in advancing conservation efforts.

Conservation stewardship can lay important groundwork that strengthens the fabric of community life and enhances civil society. Conservation stewardship involves a web of relationships among organizations, community institutions, and people of all ages. In the